REVITALIZING
DOWNTOWN
ALBERTA
KIT
Alberta
MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS
TECHNICAL
RESOURCE
1

FOREWORD

REVITALIZING DOWNTOWN

Technical Resource 1

PART OF

Revitalizing Downtown Alberta: A Self Help Action Kit

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Although the push for downtown revitalization is a relatively recent phenomenon in Alberta, numerous revitalization projects have been undertaken in other provinces and communities in Canada as well as in the U.S. Much can be learned from these projects, both the successful and the not so successful. By examining the successful projects, we can determine what works. By examining those that have proven less successful, we can learn what to avoid. This Technical Resource Book is based upon such an examination. The primary emphasis is on successful Canadian projects although valuable insight has been obtained from the U.S. experience as well.

On the basis of this examination, ideas are provided on initiating, organizing for, and undertaking a downtown revitalization project - ideas appropriate for Alberta downtowns. The underlying philosophy throughout the Resource Book is that for downtown revitalization to succeed, the initiating force, primary commitment to, and ongoing momentum for revitalization must come from the downtown business people themselves. The total support of the local municipal government is also crucial. Local business initiative and commitment, combined with strong municipal support, is the common element in all the successful projects examined.

This Technical Resource Book is divided into three sections. Section 1 provides ideas on how a revitalization project can be initiated as well as organizational options for developing and undertaking a project. Section 2 provides guidelines on how to evaluate your local situation thereby forming a basis for developing a potential solution. Section 3 identifies the various components of a viable solution to downtown revitalization based upon what has worked elsewhere.

CONTENTS

Section 1
ORGANIZATION _____ 1
Section 2
EVALUATION _____ 61
Section 3
VIABLE SOLUTIONS _____ 133

SECTION 1

ORGANIZATION

This section contains:

3 INTRODUCTION

5 GETTING STARTED
- Need
- Commitment
- Leadership
- Conclusion

15 GETTING FOCUSSED

17 ORGANIZING FOR ACTION
- Initial Considerations
- The Committee's Role
- The Municipal Role

59 CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition that the most successful downtown revitalization programs are those which have been locally initiated and locally controlled. It has been found that the long term success of a downtown revitalization program is invariably linked to the commitment and participation of those directly affected by the initiative. This commitment, in turn, is often a function of the extent to which those affected have actively participated in the exploration of the issues, the definition of the problem and ultimately the determination of which actions to take.

This first Section of information discusses in detail the different phases of organizational development and the organizational structures and options which should be considered to ensure an effective and efficient organization for downtown revitalization.

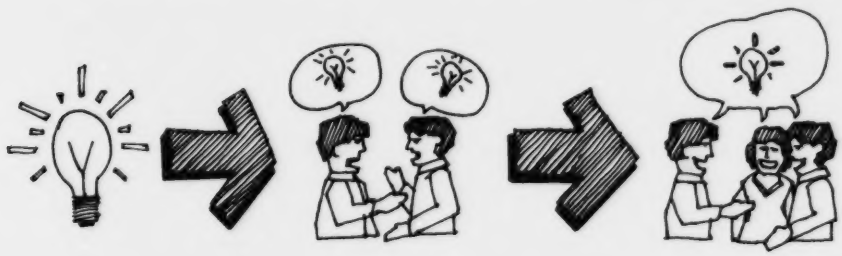
GETTING STARTED

One of the most difficult steps in downtown revitalization is getting started. There is no magic formula that can be followed, no guarantees that discussions will lead anywhere, and no consensus as to who is actually responsible for initiation. The only principle that can be relied upon is that unless something is started, nothing will be done.

How a revitalization program is started will vary from community to community. In all instances, however, an initial impetus or spark must happen which ignites a recognition of a need to revitalize downtown.

The spark may take the form of:

- repeated requests to council from the local Chamber of Commerce, individual businessmen or a group of merchants;
- the formation of concerned downtown business groups;
- rumours and discussions in the downtown community that suggest business could be better;
- public displeasure with downtown becoming evident to Council while preparing community plans; or,
- concern expressed by elected officials themselves, the Town Planner or members of the Town Administration.



Regardless of the source, the spark tells you that something should be done. See if others feel the same way. Try getting a group together for some informal discussions. Council, a business organization or some concerned colleagues may be able to help you. This informal ad hoc group should consider three things. First, is there really a problem and how big is it?

Second, do people feel strongly about it? Is there commitment? And third, are the "right" people interested - the leaders in your community that can get things happening and get things done?

Need

Gauging the extent of the need for downtown revitalization will determine not only if a revitalization program should be embarked upon, but also will provide a greater awareness and understanding of the problem, and relevant data for generating interest and support. Elected officials, for example, may question if the need is real or perceived depending upon their political platforms and allegiances, or they may feel that downtown businessmen are chronic complainers. An initial review and general awareness of the extent of the need will provide the necessary data to allay potential skepticism.

Gauging the extent of the need for a downtown revitalization program does not require detailed surveys and investigation at this stage. All that is required during the initiation process is that a simple "check-list" of questions be asked about downtown. These questions can form the basis for discussion and will assist in determining if there is enough of a problem to proceed.

In answering and discussing the questions, it is important that you recognize that your ad hoc group knows your community best, but the discussion also must be critical and objective. Personal loyalties and biases must be discarded. Downtown must be viewed not as it used to be, or how some would like it to be, but as it actually is.

The following checklist can be used to quickly identify some of the potential problem areas in your downtown and ascertain the extent of the need for revitalization.

ECONOMIC AND ATTITUDINAL ENVIRONMENT

Economic Environment

__ a) Failure to tap potential market.
__ b) Failure to compete (merchandise variety and price) with neighboring communities or outlying retail centres.
__ c) Relocation of downtown businesses to outlying retail centres.
__ d) Closing down of downtown businesses to outlying retail centres.
__ e) Increasing number of storefront vacancies.
__ f) Vacant upper stories.
__ g) No new development in recent years.

__ h) Decreasing number of pedestrians and shoppers.
__ i) Vacant land along main street.
__ j) Lack of suitable sites or buildings to attract new businesses.
__ k) Declining market.
__ l) Unstable employment base.

Attitude

__ m) No interest from business community or building owners to upgrade premises.
__ n) Apathy from business community with regard to problems.
__ o) Residents shop elsewhere for goods and services available locally.

MUNICIPAL POLICY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Municipal Policy

__ a) No explicit policy to protect viability of downtown as a retail centre.
__ b) Overly restrictive land use standards.
__ c) Overly stringent development agreement standards.
__ d) Inadequate sign regulations.
__ e) Inadequate maintenance by-laws.
__ f) Hesitancy from council to support downtown initiatives.
__ g) Lack of technical and staff resources to pursue downtown initiatives.

Infrastructure

__ h) Inadequate water, storm, and sewer systems to support new development.
__ i) Inadequate street lighting.
__ j) Poor maintenance of public spaces.
__ k) Business disruption by frequent repair of sidewalks and utilities.

FUNCTION AND PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Function

__ a) Poor access to downtown.
__ b) Lack of adequate directional signs.
__ c) Poor road maintenance.
__ d) Inconvenient traffic circulation within downtown.

__ e) Traffic congestion and traffic conflicts.
__ f) Insufficient on-street parking.
__ g) Inconvenient location of off-street parking areas.
__ h) Poor access from parking areas to stores.
__ i) Poor pedestrian routes.

Physical Appearance

__ j) Unattractive entry to downtown.
__ k) Dirty and littered streets, sidewalks and lanes.
__ l) Poorly maintained building facades.
__ m) Inappropriate remodelling.
__ n) Uninteresting store interiors.
__ o) Unattractive, poorly designed, poorly lighted parking areas.
__ p) Unattractive, poorly maintained sidewalks.
__ q) Inappropriate and poorly maintained signage.
__ r) Lack of visual focal points.

A quick review and discussion around this checklist will allow you and the group to focus on how severe the problem is, if there is a real need for downtown revitalization, and, most importantly, should you proceed with a revitalization program. Before this decision is made, however, it is imperative that you recognize that need alone is not enough. Two other vital elements, which are absolutely essential in undertaking the task for revitalizing downtown, must be present. These elements are commitment and leadership.

Commitment

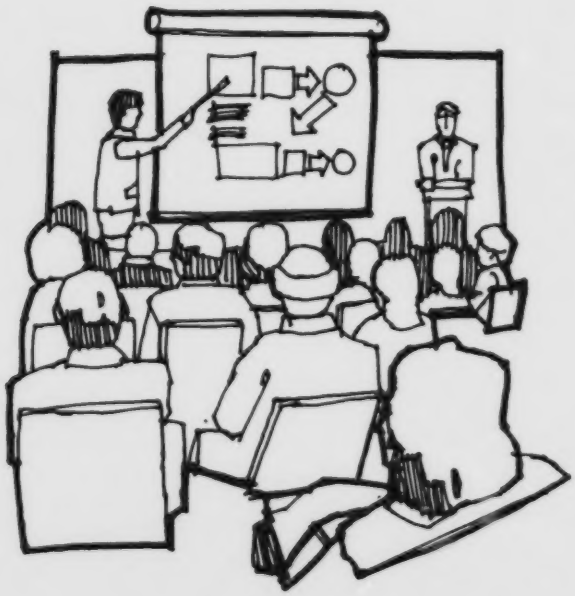
Downtown revitalization can only succeed if the community is strongly committed to that goal. There must be a belief that with time, energy and money, the downtown once again can be a financially viable, physically attractive, and a functionally vital component of the community. This belief, or commitment to success, is required on the part of both the public and private sectors, that is, council and the downtown businessmen themselves. The strongest commitment, however, must come from the business community.

Case studies show that when the prime instigator and mover in attempts to revitalize downtown is council, the interest of the businessmen tends to dissipate. They assume that council will handle the problem. Without the total support and cooperation of the businessmen, who, after all, have the greatest vested interest in revitalizing downtown, council's efforts could amount to very little.

From the outset, it must be made clear that more than just physical improvements are necessary for revitalizing downtown. Economic revitalization, which may involve new marketing strategies, new merchandising techniques, and new methods of attracting people back to downtown, is also required. Economic revitalization is the prime responsibility of the business people, not council. Council's primary function is to create a favourable environment and to offer assistance if the interest and commitment is present, but the driving force must come from those most concerned ... the business people.

Only you can measure the strength of commitment. Some factors to consider in measuring its strength include:

- The turnout at your preliminary informal meetings held to determine interest.
- The response towards potential financial contributions.
- The response of businesses to potential marketing changes.
- The number of people who volunteer to devote time and energy by sitting on action oriented subcommittees or just being available to help as required.



Certain principles must be stressed at the preliminary meetings:

- At some point, commitment must be translated into actions and financial expenditures.
- Commitment must last throughout the duration of the downtown revitalization program.
- The prime responsibility for downtown revitalization rests with the downtown business people.

If support for these principles is not apparent, you should carefully assess whether or not to proceed with a revitalization program. It could become an exercise in frustration.

Leadership

Downtown revitalization always involves many actors - council, staff, the business community, landowners and, to a great extent, the general public whose support is essential for success. Strong and effective leadership is required to tie all these actors together and ensure they all move towards a common goal.

Every community has one or more strong leaders, usually business people, who are long term residents and have a real interest and pride in their town. Such people attend meetings, organize events, may run for council or sit on the local Chamber of Commerce. They are regarded as "successful", are respected, and often hold prestigious positions in the town's social fabric. Because of this "track record", they make good leaders in that people will have confidence in issues they support, will believe in its success, and will be willing to work for them. In addition to a capability for inspiring faith and support, a strong leader must be a good manager and decision maker. These are the types of people needed to head up a downtown revitalization program. Get them involved early on, as part of your ad hoc group.

In most communities, potential leaders are easily identifiable. In fact, they may have provided the "spark" which generated the interest in embarking on a revitalization program. Members of council or the Chamber of Commerce are usually obvious choices. It must be recognized, however, that such people serve the community as a whole and the potential for conflict between total community interests versus the commitment required to specific downtown issues, should be considered.

Conclusion

The existence of the three elements:

- **evident need,**
- **strong commitment, and**
- **capable leadership,**

are the threshold conditions with which a downtown revitalization program should be initiated, and the foundation upon which the program is built. If you and your ad hoc group have determined that you have a foundation, the next step in the process is getting a focus on what the issues actually are and determining a preliminary strategy to address these issues.

The following subsection, Getting Focussed, describes the second phase in the process.

GETTING FOCUSSED

Once you and your ad hoc group have decided that you have a foundation for doing something, you must start to think seriously about how to proceed. Numerous successful downtown revitalization initiatives have started with the formation of an exploratory group comprised of interested and concerned individuals to focus on the problem of revitalizing downtown. Many of the same people who participated in the initial, informal meetings as part of your ad hoc group will sit on this exploratory group. Unlike the ad hoc group, however, which met to gauge interest and determine if a foundation exists, the exploratory group must start building upon this foundation. Specifically, this group will be required first to discuss, explore and focus on the issues and opportunities of downtown and, second, to develop an initial approach or strategy. The Workbook of this kit was especially designed for use by the exploratory group to assist in achieving these objectives. Using the Workbook will enable the group to:

- identify the issues and opportunities which should be discussed and explored;
- consider what downtown revitalization can actually involve;
- identify what assistance and resources may be available;
- develop a general strategy or approach to downtown revitalization; and,
- determine priorities based upon the major issues and available resources.

The Workbook enables the group to focus on a course of action. The course of action selected will govern to a large extent the organizational structure which will be required to further refine and implement the strategy. Your exploratory group, can later serve as a foundation for putting together a formal organization to implement your downtown revitalization program.

Because of the important role the exploratory group must assume in focussing on the issues, and developing a strategy on how to proceed, the group should ideally be comprised of individuals representing both the various interests involved in downtown and the people who can make things happen. The group's effectiveness, therefore, will be strengthened if councillors, Chamber of Commerce representatives, active downtown businessmen, members of the town administration and community leaders are included. This is not to say that others concerned and interested in your downtown should be excluded. It is important at this early stage to build enthusiasm and support by getting as many people involved and "fired up" about downtown revitalization as possible. By getting certain key individuals to participate in exploratory meetings, however, credibility and legitimacy can be established. Total community support, the type of support which can greatly benefit a downtown revitalization program, will likely follow. Also, the more key political, administrative and business people, as well as community leaders you can get involved in your exploratory group, the firmer will be your foundation for putting together a solid organizational structure later on.

ORGANIZING FOR ACTION

The strategy developed by the exploratory group earlier in the process will be the key determinant of the nature of the formal group that must be organized to plan and carry the program through. A downtown revitalization program requires considerable planning and organization. Unless you are properly organized, it is unlikely that a comprehensive program can even be formulated, furthermore implemented. The best of intentions and strongest of commitment will be futile.

Depending on the scope and magnitude of the strategy pursued, the organization formed to revitalize downtown can:

- remain a completely voluntary but structured committee; or
- take the form of a Business Revitalization Zone Board; or
- be a combined effort of a Board working closely with a structured voluntary committee.

Before you decide on the type of organization you will need, carefully review your strategy, identify what form of organization is necessary for implementing your strategy, and structure your organization to suit your needs.

Although there is no one formula for organizing, experience in other downtown initiatives has pointed toward a number of elements that must be present in order for a Downtown Revitalization Committee to function efficiently and effectively. These elements are described in detail below.

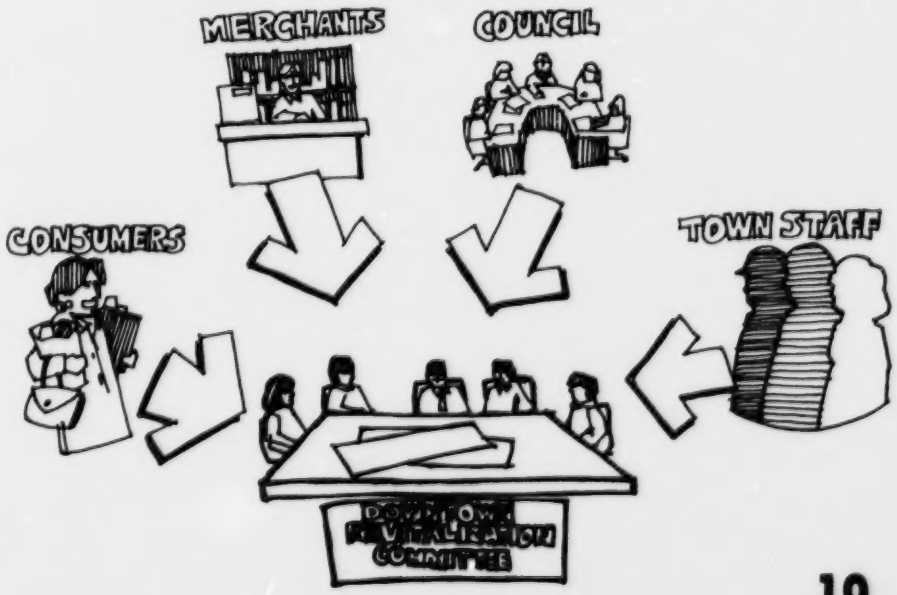
Initial Considerations

REPRESENTATION

The organizational structure, or makeup and size of your Committee, will depend upon the social and organizational structure of your community, and the degree and source of interest and commitment. If, for example, a downtown business association is already in place, the organizers and members of this association are obviously interested in and committed to the survival of downtown and should be represented on your committee. Your exploratory group provides a good source of potential members.

Although the specific structural makeup of communities may vary, four groups which have key roles to play in downtown revitalization are present in every Alberta town. In order to achieve maximum cooperation and success, it is important that each of these four groups be represented on your Committee. The four groups include:

- Downtown businessmen.
- Municipal council.
- Town administrative staff.
- The consuming public.



Because the roles of the downtown businessmen and council are the most vital, these two groups should receive the greatest representation.

1. Downtown Businessmen

Downtown businessmen and merchants must be represented on your Committee since they have the greatest vested interest in success and are directly affected by any revitalization program. In fact, the entire thrust of a revitalization program is primarily for their benefit and should be largely "their show". Also, because the implementation of a program will require some financing and the major beneficiaries will be the businesses, much of the funding should be either directly or indirectly the responsibility of this group. They should have a large "say", therefore, in determining how the funds will be spent. In order to gain the support of the entire business community, you may wish to include Chamber of Commerce members on your Committee recognizing that the members selected should also be downtown businessmen.

2. Municipal Council

Representation on your Committee from the municipal council is crucial since they are the decisionmakers, and legislators, and function as the regulatory agency for development. Council has the ability to review and, where necessary, streamline the development process as well as to ascertain that the goals of a revitalization program complement the objectives of the General Municipal Plan (GMP) and the Land Use Bylaw (LUB). Council, therefore, provides the Committee with a measure of authority for spearheading the project and for controlling and directing the activities of many of the actors involved in downtown revitalization.

Council has certain specific powers and controls, in addition to its legislative authority, which are essential for the success of a downtown revitalization initiative. Because of its access to, and control over, municipal finances, council may serve as an important source of funding for the program. The more directly involved and committed council is to a revitalization program, the more likely they are to contribute financially. Furthermore, because of its control over community finances and taxation, council is most qualified to identify what is reasonable in terms of implementation expenditures, and how these expenditures would impact not only downtown businessmen, but the community as a whole.

Another specific reason for ensuring sound representation on the Committee from council is their control of, and ability to direct, the responsibilities of the town administrative staff. Town administrative staff can serve as an important source of expertise, information and manpower. The implementation of certain components of a downtown revitalization program will ultimately rest with the administration under the direction of council. The municipal development officer, for example, may be responsible for implementing a downtown physical improvement concept. Maintenance of public property is also a responsibility of the administration. Keeping downtown clean, prompt snow removal, and the minimization of disruption involved with repair work are important elements in improving the downtown environment.

Finally, in most small towns, the public sector is a significant downtown landowner. The town hall, the public library, the firehall, are all owned by the municipality. As a landowner, therefore, council, like the businessmen, has a vested interest in downtown. Council also can influence to some extent the decision making of other government landowners, such as the fate of the old courthouse or the location of a new liquor store.

Depending upon how your local council is organized, certain councillors may be better qualified for representation on your Committee than others. If council has formed an economic development committee, for example, the members of that committee may be ideal candidates since downtown revitalization is primarily an exercise in economic development and linking a revitalization program to the economic development priorities of the whole community is essential. Downtown businessmen who have been elected to council are also good candidates for your Committee.

3. Town Administration Staff

Town staff, as was previously noted, is an important source of data and information, and have the expertise, capability and "know-how" to undertake essential tasks. Often, things that must be done in preparing and implementing a revitalization program can be worked into, and form a part of, their usual responsibilities for the day-to-day implementation of programs sanctioned by council. By including town staff on your Committee, you can encourage their interest and commitment to the downtown revitalization program. Since staff often functions in an advisory capacity to council, it can influence council's policy and decision making in support of a revitalization program. And because town staff works closely with the community, it is usually knowledgeable about what can be done, and how to do it. As such, representation on the Committee from the administration, someone holding a senior and responsible position with skills related to downtown revitalization: be it a development officer, town manager or town engineer, may be of considerable assistance in the task of planning and implementing a program.

4. Consuming Public

The final group which should be considered when structuring a Committee is the consuming public. After all, the consuming public provides the market, and the fundamental support for downtown business. It is their downtown too! The perspective of the user is important both for determining what is wrong with downtown and what should be done. Also, any long term viable solution to downtown's problems will invariably affect the entire community. Representation from the community, therefore, should be included on your Committee. How the representative(s) is selected will depend on your particular situation. Nevertheless, it is important that the representative(s) be familiar and concerned with downtown issues as well as community wide issues.

Depending upon:

- how much your community relies upon other levels of government for support services and assistance;
- the working relationship between council, staff and other government officials; and,
- the interest and enthusiasm of those officials,

you may wish to expand your Committee membership to include, in particular, your designated regional planning commission or Alberta Municipal Affairs planner or any individual whose expertise you feel would contribute to your group. Remember, however, that the Committee must be of a workable size. Although membership must be sufficiently large to obtain adequate community representation and to ensure the formation of a strong group that can get things done, large groups can be unwieldy and difficult to manage. The logistics of trying to arrange meetings when dealing with numerous conflicting schedules can be problematic. Experience has shown it is best to remain small - ten persons or less - although, with strong leadership and interested members, groups of varying sizes can work.

One method of maintaining a workable size while maximizing participation, is to include non-voting "ex officio" members. These are members who, by virtue of their position or expertise, are invited to participate as resource persons to the Committee but, because they have no vote, are not an integral part of the committee and are not involved in all discussions and procedural functions. The town planner or town engineer, for example, could be a non-voting member. Regardless of how you structure your Committee, remember that real power in terms of decision making and financial commitment must lie with council and business representatives.

A second method for maintaining a workable Committee size is to invite selected participants or interested individuals only to those specific meetings where a special problem is discussed or a particular viewpoint is desirable. Consultants, for example, can be invited to attend only those meeting where their specialized input is required. Where policy, organizational or financial matters are discussed, their participation and attendance may not be essential.

Regardless of how you ultimately structure your Committee, three rules of thumb should be followed:

1. Ensure that the Committee represents the interests of all parties involved with, and affected by, downtown revitalization.

2. Ensure that the individuals comprising the Committee are strongly committed to the concept of revitalization and are leaders in your community.

3. Remember that the structure as described represents the ideal and may not be feasible in your community - you must work as best you can with what you have.

ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT

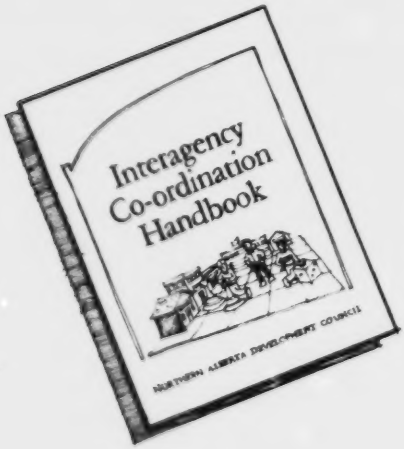
The Committee organized to deal with downtown revitalization will be required to work as a coordinated, cohesive group in order to be effective. The primary mode of operation will likely be through formal meetings. Such meetings will require structure and procedural guidelines so that business can be efficiently carried out. The key to successful meetings is good leadership in the form of a strong chairman.

You will recognize the potential candidates for chairman. They generally emerge because of their level of credibility in the community and organizational skills. A good chairman also should display firmness, courtesy, tact, impartiality and a willingness to give everyone an opportunity to express themselves. A chairman will be required to give leadership, keep order, and ensure that basic rules of procedure are followed. At the same time, a chairman should remain flexible. Often, the chairman will be called upon to serve as "spokesman" for your group. It is important, therefore, that your chairman be carefully selected.

Other guidelines or tools for effectively managing your Committee are as follows:

- Meet on a regular basis to keep the momentum and interest going and to allow members to schedule their work program and other activities accordingly. Special meetings can be called to deal with special problems or crises, but do not overdo it.
- Prepare a proper agenda. This will ensure that business is carried out in an efficient and orderly manner and provides a clear start and definitive end to your meeting.
- Record your meetings in the form of minutes. Minutes should be brief and contain a summary of decisions made and actions to be taken. They should not describe the entire discussion. You may wish to appoint a recording secretary or rotate this responsibility, but establish your method from the outset.
- Set up a system for issuing public statements. Media support through the local newspaper may be of considerable benefit in obtaining public support for your program and generating enthusiasm. Statements to the media should be carefully worded and endorsed by the Committee members.

For further information on these and other guidelines, consult the "Interagency Coordination Handbook" prepared by the Northern Alberta Development Council. This short, concise publication provides an excellent overview on how to manage a committee.



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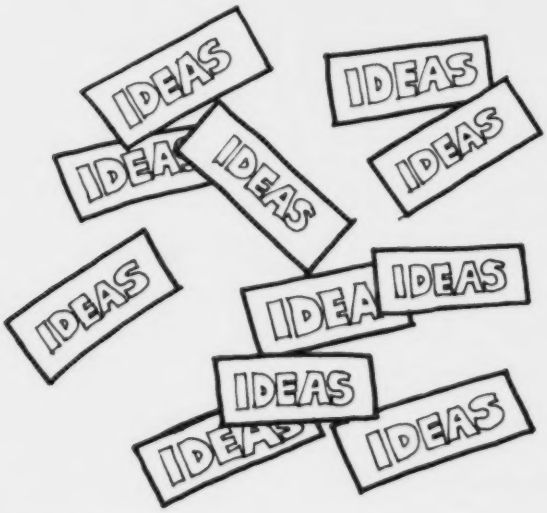
ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESS

Once the Committee has been structured, a chairman selected and procedural rules such as recording of minutes agreed upon, you are organized to embark upon a downtown revitalization process. Now, how do you begin? Five initial steps should be undertaken by the Committee at the outset. These steps will provide the direction required for embarking on a program. Depending upon what has transpired to this point of the process, some may appear redundant. Also, the exact order in which the steps are undertaken is discretionary and will vary for each community. The decision is yours. Nevertheless, the five initial steps do provide a starting point.



1. Generate Ideas

Commence by holding an internal "brainstorming" session dealing with downtown. Discuss the problems, discuss possible solutions, get all your ideas out on the table. The questions in the Workbook which have already been discussed by the exploratory group, and the strategy developed by that group, can once again serve as a basis for discussion. The discussion can be more indepth and thorough since you have presumably by this time decided to proceed. You are committed and it is important that your evaluation of the questions and brainstorming session recognize this commitment. Also, the composition of your Committee likely will vary from the exploratory group.

It is important that the Committee members are familiar with, understand, and realize the relevance of those two major components of a comprehensive strategy for which they are responsible - economic revitalization and physical image. These components can be separated for discussion and working purposes into five subcomponents:

- **Promotion.**
- **Recruitment.**
- **Marketing.**
- **Physical Improvement.**
- **Financing.**

Promotion, recruitment and marketing all deal with economic revitalization while physical improvement deals with the physical image.

Financing is naturally the backbone of both components and potential sources should be carefully considered and investigated. Financial implications of undertaking any action and whose responsible also should be discussed. The only legislation available in Alberta which allows for municipal collection of funds specifically for downtown revitalization is Section 171 of the Municipal Government Act - Business Revitalization Zone (BRZ). The BRZ may not, however, be appropriate for every community and other means of financing will be required. Suggestions are provided in the question series contained in the Workbook. If you have already decided to follow the BRZ route, other sources of financing should still be investigated since the use of BRZ funds is prescribed by legislation and can not be applied to all facets of revitalization.

2. Identify Goals

The generation of ideas will allow you to clarify exactly what you can, and hope to, accomplish. The next step is to translate what you want to accomplish into goals. The definition of goals is an important task since they verbalize your intent and can affect every aspect of your revitalization program. Your actions and decisions are both functions of your goals.

Your exploratory group has already started the process of setting goals and these goals should form the basis for developing a detailed strategy for revitalizing downtown. You may modify, add to, or delete some or your goals as you become further aware of your financial and manpower resources as well as timing considerations. You will also need to discuss and further refine these goals by attaching objectives to each goal. Remember that goals generally are an expression of intent. A goal can be very general. For example, your intent to revitalize downtown is a goal. More specific goals may include:

- To improve retail sales.
- To improve downtown's physical image.
- To coordinate economic revitalization with physical improvements.

Objectives are statements of how you can achieve your goals. Each goal may have one or more objectives attached to it. For example, if your goal is to improve the physical appearance of downtown, your associated objectives may be:

- To clean up litter.
- To renovate historic buildings.
- To repair and upgrade storefronts.
- To replace cement sidewalks with brick.

Your objectives can be translated into actions, the sum of which, in turn, will result in a detailed strategy or approach. Discuss your goals in this general framework or alter the framework to suit your needs.

3. Hold a General Meeting

A general meeting of downtown businessmen, merchants and any other concerned individuals should be held early in the revitalization process. Such meetings have likely already occurred during the initiation and exploratory process and served as a vehicle or impetus for starting a program and organizing for action. A meeting at this time shows that you are now organized and serious about embarking on a program. The purpose of the meeting should be to:

- generate additional ideas;
- get the community and businessmen involved in a common cause;
- unite the downtown businessmen;
- instill support and enthusiasm; and,
- ensure that your Committee goals are in keeping with those of the majority.

By showing that you are not only committed but organized, you will gain credibility and the confidence of the business community. They will be more willing to provide financial support, to cooperate and to work towards the common goal of revitalizing downtown.

4. Do An Inventory of Organizations

Every community has numerous organizations - a combination of government, private and volunteer groups and associations which could include council, a Chamber of Commerce, other business groups, religious groups, community service clubs and citizen action groups. It is important that the Committee conduct an inventory of the groups comprising this organizational structure and in so doing, list the roles, responsibilities and powers of each, particularly as it pertains to downtown revitalization. Such an inventory will enable you to draw upon resources within your own community. By building upon your community's organizational structure, you can benefit from the established "track record" and experience of existing organizations. Gain their support, have them cooperate, assist and work with you. Identify their turf and use this to your advantage rather than working at cross purposes. Organizations which have built up a turf tend to be protective of that turf and may not welcome or work with a new group if they feel threatened or excluded.

Once you have completed the inventory, you may consider expanding your Committee if obvious, essential groups are not represented or invite particular groups to attend some of your meetings. Remember that total community involvement is of considerable benefit to a successful program.

5. Define Your Roles and Responsibilities

The Committee is responsible for four major roles.

- **To develop a detailed comprehensive strategy.**
- **To implement that strategy.**
- **To coordinate all actions.**
- **To monitor and evaluate all actions.**

The Committee is responsible for developing a detailed comprehensive strategy for downtown revitalization which includes both economic and physical aspects. It must analyze and assess the situation and prepare specific action plans for both the short and long-terms. The initial strategy or Action Plan put together by the exploratory group is your starting point for detailed strategy development.

Refer to the Workbook as a reference for further strategy development. Once a comprehensive strategy is developed, it must be implemented by designating specific responsibilities and identifying and assessing resources. Once again the Workbook and the exploratory group's Action Plan provides a reference for ideas on implementation.

The planning and implementation functions are the primary reasons for having organized a Committee. To keep the program on stream, the Committee must coordinate all the actions of the different elements of the community, as well as those within the committee. The Committee must also monitor all activities and actions to ensure conformity to the overall revitalization strategy.

The Committee's Role

1. Develop a Comprehensive Revitalization Strategy

An effective strategy for revitalizing downtown consists of a two-pronged process. First, you must "get the ball rolling" with immediate, short-term actions and second, you must develop a plan for the future comprised of long-term actions. Most downtown revitalization actions can be broken down into short and long-term actions although at some point, these actions must mesh. An immediate action plan is required for the short term and a future action plan for the long term. A comprehensive strategy for revitalization requires that all five of these subcomponents of a downtown revitalization program be considered both in your immediate and future action plans.

The responsibilities of the Committee for each subcomponent is generally described as follows:

Promotion - To promote the downtown within and around the community thereby drawing people into downtown. This is an important subcomponent of economic revitalization. Advertising in the local newspaper or broadcasting media, as well as posters, signage and other forms of information and identification should be considered. Special promotional events should be organized which are oriented around themes and attract people. Special events which draw the consumer by generating interest, must be considered. The Viable Solutions Section of this Resource Book provides promotional ideas which have proven successful in other communities. Promotional events could be organized cooperatively with other groups such as the Chamber of Commerce. Remember to utilize the activities and events sponsored by other groups to your advantage by working directly with these groups.

Marketing - To develop and solicit support for a comprehensive business strategy that markets the downtown as a cohesive area capable of attracting people. Simple steps, such as those used by shopping centres including agreement on common hours of operation and collective advertising, may be used. The Viable Solutions Section provides examples of marketing strategies developed in other communities.

A second element of this stream is to assist individual merchants to be more competitive through improved marketing practices by offering advise on such features as pricing, displays, selection, service and advertising. Government sponsored programs such as the Market Action Program run by Alberta Tourism and Small Business can provide valuable input. Details on this and other programs can be found in Technical Resource 3 of this Kit. Again, other business groups such as the Chamber of Commerce can provide marketing support and assistance.

Recruitment - To recruit new businesses into the downtown which complement and add to those already existing. As such, strategies must be devised which promote and market both the downtown and the community to the outside world. Attendance and displays at trade fairs and exhibitions, advertising in financial business magazines and actually soliciting within potential markets are some of the techniques which should be considered. The feasibility of recruiting businesses from other segments of the community also should be considered.

Although a short term recruitment strategy can be commenced at the outset, it must be recognized that business recruitment is generally a lengthy process requiring much patience and persistence. Also, the problems of downtown should be thoroughly investigated to determine what businesses would be most desirable and, therefore, actively solicited. Close cooperation and consultation with council and the administration will enhance the chances of successfully recruiting new business. Recruitment of new business is part of an economic development program in many communities and is a responsibility generally undertaken by council. It will be the subcommittee's responsibility, however, to ensure that those businesses attracted to your town which belong in downtown do, in fact, locate downtown. The Viable Solution Section discusses a process for developing a recruitment program used in other communities.

Physical Improvement - To coordinate the physical improvement of downtown. Immediate actions which could be undertaken while a physical design concept and circulation plan is being developed for downtown is a simple clean-up or maintenance campaign and a small scale beautification scheme. Active lobbying of downtown merchants and council to take pride in downtown by cleaning it up and picking up the garbage will be required. Merchant cooperation is essential. Ideas for a physical design scheme and beautification could be solicited at the same time and historically significant buildings identified. A historic preservation society may provide valuable assistance and input. Include them on the subcommittee. Technical Resources 4 and 5 of this Kit provides information on physical improvements. An overall perspective on the role of physical improvements in revitalizing downtowns is provided in the Viable Solutions Section.

Finance - To identify sources, and solicit financing for all action plans. It will be necessary to identify how much certain actions will cost (with input from the Committee and remaining subcommittees), who should pay for them, and where financial assistance may be obtained. If the BRZ process is implemented at the outset, the responsibility of managing and distributing the funds by establishing a budgeting and recording system must be assumed. If not, a downtown revitalization fund based upon volunteer contributions from downtown businessmen may be considered. Regardless of how the funds are obtained from the businessmen, other sources of financial resources should also be investigated. This is crucial since the extent of financial resource obtained from the business community, council or other sources will determine how much can be done. Financial management is a sensitive issue since how the funds are actually spent may invoke considerable comment, and possibly criticism. The Committee should work closely with the economic development committee, as well as other business groups and government agencies.

1 a) Developing an Immediate Action Plan

By developing a plan for immediate action, interest and enthusiasm is maintained. Additional interest is generated and new recruits can be obtained once people see that "things are happening". Immediate actions provide for immediate results.

The immediate action plan should take into account the five subcomponents or streams of a downtown revitalization program. The most effective means of planning, as well as implementing each stream, is to assign the responsibility to a subcommittee or individual whose primary function will be:

- To plan specific short term actions.
- To do these actions.
- To monitor the actions.
- To report to the Committee.

Ideally, a subcommittee provides a greater opportunity for planning and undertaking short term actions because more people are involved. Since the responsibility can then be shared, the task does not become too onerous for any one individual. On the other hand, an enthusiastic, hard working individual may be capable of achieving just as much as a subcommittee comprised of two or more persons. The structure you choose will be dependent upon your manpower resources.

The head of each subcommittee must be a member of the Downtown Revitalization Committee. It may be necessary that other people be utilized to assist him in his duties. Merchants and downtown businessmen represent a good potential source for subcommittee members. Being part of a subcommittee provides an ideal method for organizing downtown businessmen and involving them in the revitalization program. The immediate actions are generally geared towards stimulating retail sales and other activities as well as interest in the downtown and are of direct benefit to those businessmen. They are appropriately and best suited, therefore, for undertaking the actual work.

It should be remembered that, although these subcommittees or individuals are being assigned the responsibility for an action stream to "get the ball rolling" by taking immediate action, they also provide a structure which can "keep the ball rolling" by ultimately assuming the responsibility for implementing and monitoring long term actions. The development of short term strategies provides a training ground for the longer term.

Ideally, all these streams should be pursued and subcommittees or individuals made responsible for each. In practice, however, depending upon your resources and manpower, as well as your particular situation and perception of the problem, the comprehensive approach may not be feasible. You must identify and prioritize your greatest needs and problem areas and allocate your resources accordingly. In some instances, where support and resources are very limited, the onus may fall exclusively on the Committee to plan and undertake all actions.

Regardless of who assumes responsibility for specific actions, the process described provides a useful sequence and structured methodology for undertaking immediate action - it provides a starting point. Through the internal organization network suggested, a foundation for implementing a future action plan is also provided. You must remain flexible, however, and tailor the process to suit your own needs.

1b) Developing A Future Action Plan

Three important steps must be undertaken in developing a strategy for future action. These steps include:

- **Analyzing the problem.**
- **Identifying a viable solution.**
- **Developing an implementation strategy (plan for action).**

Each step is described as follows:

- **Analyze the Problem** - Analyzing and thoroughly understanding the problem is necessary for identifying a meaningful, and, therefore, viable solution. Your analysis should consider the consumer, the competition and your downtown. How to conduct a thorough analysis is detailed in the Evaluation Section of this Technical Resource Book.

- **Identify a Viable Solution** - The type of viable long term solution selected should be comprehensive and include both economic revitalization and a plan for physical improvements. To succeed, a sympathetic municipal climate is essential as is evidenced by successful downtown programs developed in other communities. Examples of such programs are described in the Viable Solutions Section of this Technical Resource Book.

- **Develop an Implementation Strategy** - A well thought out solution to downtown's problems will permit the development of implementation strategies which can be translated into concrete actions. Many of these actions will be long term in nature.

  Some short term actions, in addition to those already planned by the subcommittees, may also be identified. Most general actions can be broken down into specific short and long term actions. The actions should be prioritized and responsibilities assigned. The finance subcommittee must play a vital role in prioritization. The implementation actions should be grouped according to the components and subcomponents of downtown revitalization. This will make the job of meshing these actions with the short term actions either planned, completed or underway, easier. The task of assigning responsibility will also be made easier.

The Committee must develop a process for undertaking the work necessary for analyzing the problem and developing a viable solution. From the solution, will stem the implementation strategies. These implementation strategies should be developed for all of the components (and subcomponents) of downtown revitalization. The questions and related actions arising from the Workbook again can be used as a reference for developing a work process and undertaking the three important steps.

Because long term actions or implementation strategies will, in turn, require a long term commitment and some expense, it is essential that the problems of your downtown be thoroughly understood and the solution and concomitant actions well thought out. How indepth an analysis and comprehensive a solution can be achieved is dependent upon your financial and manpower resources.

Based upon these resources, a group of qualified professionals may be required to undertake the work necessary for developing a viable solution and then translating that solution into a meaningful concept and a plan for action.

The professional resources you will need will vary throughout the process with certain types of professionals being required to complete certain tasks at appropriate points in the process. For example, an architect may be hired to prepare a renovation concept for a particular block of buildings with design guidelines addressing specifics such as building materials, facade, colour, texture and signage, but only after a planner has prepared an overall concept for downtown identifying the block of buildings to be renovated. The important thing to remember is that you, the Committee, controls whose input is required at what point.

The professionals you may require include planners, economists, marketing experts, architects, landscape architects and engineers. Consultants, because of their expertise and training, provide the usual and most expedient method of undertaking a study. Your town planner may act as a consultant although it must be recognized that the planner has other functions and responsibilities and must consider the entire community. The same applies to town administrative staff. By utilizing consultants, this conflict is avoided. Professional consultants are trained to organize and undertake a study and serve as a valuable resource for ideas and information. The types of consultants which may be of assistance, and how to hire such consultants are described in Technical Resource 6 of this Kit.

An important tool for managing all professionals, be they consultants or qualified staff, is to define terms of reference. This may be an appropriate job for your town planner who can act as a facilitator. The planner can assist you is defining what each professional must do, and at what point their input is required. A separate set of terms of reference is required for each contract and may serve as a basis for establishing a budget. Suggestions on establishing terms of reference are included in Technical Resource 6 as well.

2. Implement the Comprehensive Revitalization Strategy

The actual implementation of a comprehensive revitalization strategy is the most difficult of the Committee's responsibilities. Although the Committee may not be directly responsible for undertaking all the actions, they will need to ensure that the actions assigned to the many actors involved in implementing a downtown revitalization strategy are, in fact, done. Many a downtown scheme has failed because, once a strategy is developed, there is no one left to "keep the ball rolling" and ensure its implementation. The driving force dissipates. The magnitude of the task is compounded by the length of time it may take to complete. It may be years before the implementation of a comprehensive revitalization program is realized. In the meantime, enthusiasm and interest may flag and eventually disappear. The ability to fully implement, or see the scheme through, is the Committee's ultimate test of commitment.

The structure for implementing the actions is already in place in the form of the subcommittees responsible for the different components of a downtown program. The functions of these subcommittees may be expanded to include the implementation of the long term actions. Remember, that by planning and undertaking short term actions, they have the capability and background to implement long term actions. They also have established contacts with other organizations and a "way of doing things".

In recognition of the long term nature and commitment required for implementation, it may be prudent to reassess the membership structure of your Committee and subcommittees. You may wish to alter the size and make up by recruiting new members which may be of greater assistance in the implementation stage, either because of past experience, financial capabilities or linkages with other organizations. Also, members who have helped start the process may be "burnt out" by now and would prefer that someone else assume some responsibility. Keep in mind though, that your original members may possess experience and insight on the rationale of the program which may be valuable to you later on in the process.

Regardless of how your Committee and subcommittees are altered, if at all, it is absolutely essential that strong representation from the downtown merchants and businessmen, and council be maintained - the merchants because they have the most to gain, council because their help and support is vital. The legislative authority and financial and administrative assistance of council can sustain the Committee through the lengthy, involved implementation process. Provision is included in the Municipal Government Act to alter the membership of a BRZ Board if that route has been chosen as long as council representation is maintained.

Depending upon your resources and degree of commitment, a revitalization manager may be hired or appointed to coordinate and assist in implementing the necessary actions identified by the solution. Opportunities for manpower assistance from other levels of government and private organizations may be available and should be explored. Alternately, a town staff member may be appointed and trained to assist in this responsibility. The ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the comprehensive downtown revitalization strategy is implemented, however, rests with the Committee.

3. Coordinate and Communicate

The function of coordination and communication is closely interrelated with monitoring and is ongoing. By monitoring activities, the Committee is aware of what is being done and, therefore, has the knowledge necessary for avoiding duplication and for coordinating all activities towards a common goal. The manner in which the Committee obtains the knowledge to properly coordinate is through communication and interaction. Coordination and communication, therefore, are inextricably related and are basically a single function.

Coordination and communication extends well beyond dealing with the subcommittees and professionals directly involved in the program. Lines of communication must be kept open with all the organizations and individuals which may influence, or be affected by, the program. In so doing, the Committee assumes the role of a facilitator. The Committee can hire, request or appoint a (staff) coordinator to assist them but, as is the case with implementation, the ultimate responsibility is theirs.

The lines of communications must be kept open and be two directional - you want to know what everyone else in the community is doing, but you must let them know what you are doing if you expect their cooperation.

Communication with council, either directly or through the economic development committee, is required to obtain legislative and financial assistance for implementation actions. Also, the Committee must ensure that municipal policies reinforce their goals.

Communication with other support group within your community, which may include:

- special interest groups,
- Chamber of Commerce,
- volunteer organizations, and
- the media,

is important for soliciting and ensuring continuous support. The support of the media is particularly important since they can substantially influence, in your favour, the thinking of the public. In the end, it is the support and patronage of the public which will determine the future viability of downtown. You should establish a good rapport and relationship with the media early in the process.

Communicating with outside resource groups, which may include:

- government agencies,
- quasi - non governmental organizations, and
- regional planning commissions,

is essential for gaining access to their expertise, ideas, data, information programs and funding opportunities.

4. Monitor and Evaluate all Activities

The fourth responsibility of the Committee will be to monitor and evaluate all activities. This is an ongoing process which, by virtue of knowing who is doing what, will allow the Committee to maintain control and ensure that all activities conform to the comprehensive revitalization strategy.

The Committee will be required to monitor the activities of all the actors and organizations directly or indirectly participating in the revitalization program.

In monitoring the activities of the subcommittees or individuals responsible for short and long-term actions, the Committee must ensure that:

- their actions are oriented towards, and not in conflict with, the established goals;
- their activities are generally in accord with, and reflect the ideas, findings and conclusions of the professionals; and,
- their activities do not duplicate the work of other community organizations.

In monitoring the activities of the professionals, be they consultants, municipal or provincial employees, the Committee must ensure that the work corresponds to the terms of reference, is on schedule, and within the allocated budget.

The Committee should also monitor and be aware of the activities of other community organizations and associations as well as Provincial Government agencies which are somehow involved in downtown revitalization or affect the outcome. You should determine if these activities are contributing towards downtown revitalization. If not, through communication and coordination, you can point the organizations towards the common goal. In particular, the activities of council and their impact on the downtown should be monitored.

Evaluation is a function that will be applied primarily to the long term actions or implementation techniques formulated to implement your comprehensive revitalization strategy. The purpose of evaluating the actions is simple - you must determine if they are working. If so, then you know you are proceeding in the right direction and at least some segment of the revitalization program will succeed. If not, you must examine the action(s) in concert with your subcommittees and resource people and identify the problem. Actions may need to be revised, new actions taken, or different responsibilities assigned depending upon the nature of the problem. Evaluation criteria are provided in the Viable Solutions Section of this Technical Resource Book.

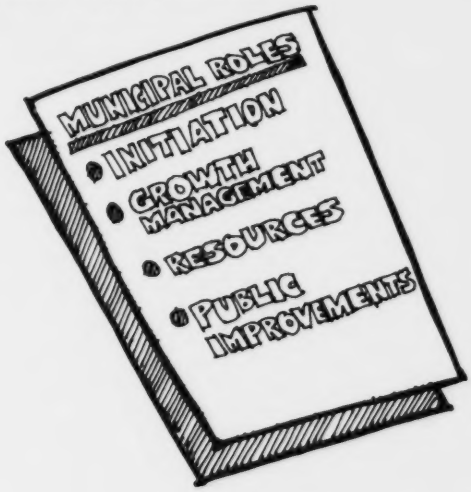
The Municipal Role

The previous subsection discussed the role the Downtown Revitalization Committee plays in developing and implementing a strategy for revitalizing downtown. In order for the Committee to be effective, however, and for any revitalization initiatives to succeed, your municipal council also has a major role to play. Council's role is more supportive than active, but nevertheless, is extremely important. In playing a strong supportive role, council must become politically committed to the concept of a strong downtown. And in very successful revitalization project across North America, local political commitment has proven to be an essential element. Without this commitment and support, little can be accomplished. You and your council must work together in a public/private partnership striving towards a common goal - a strong and vibrant downtown.

The municipal commitment and support for a downtown revitalization initiative must be ongoing in order to maintain downtown's future viability. Council must view downtown as a community-wide resource and a focus of everyday life. It should understand that in order for downtown to function as the focus of the community, a healthy economy and vibrant physical image is needed. Remember, however, that council's role must remain supportive. Revitalization will work only if the impetus comes from, and is sustained by, the business people.

What part can municipal council actually play in revitalizing and sustaining downtown? Four opportunities are evident which fall directly under the purview and control of your municipal council. The opportunities include:

- Assistance in "getting started" and ongoing participation in a revitalization program.
- A supportive growth management and development strategy.
- Financial and technical resource assistance.
- Public improvements.



Each of these opportunities is discussed in the subsections which follow.

1. Initiation and Participation

As was stated at the outset, a major hurdle to overcome in any revitalization project is getting started. Although the initial interest and concern must come from the downtown business people, council can play a significant role in initiating a program by providing the opportunity or venue for a concerned group of business people to "get together" and start discussing issues.

Council is already an organized group in its own right with "official" status and recognition and can facilitate public gatherings with relative ease. A councillor, a committee of council, or a responsible staff person such as the town manager or the designated planner can be appointed by council to organize initial "start up" meetings and provide preliminary leadership if necessary. Councillors are respected community leaders and can motivate citizens to get organized and take action. In most communities, at least one councillor is a downtown businessman. Such a person provides an ideal candidate for helping a concerned group "get the ball rolling", as long as the need is apparent, and the interest and commitment from the business people is evident.

Once a concerned exploratory group has gone through the preliminary discussion stage, has considered what is involved in revitalizing downtown, and has decided to properly organize and take action, council can provide ongoing support and assistance in "keeping the ball rolling". An effective means of accomplishing this is through participation by representation on whatever downtown organization is formed to actually "take action".

An even more effective method of supporting and participating in revitalization is through the approval of a BRZ (Business Revitalization Zone) bylaw. Although the petition to form a BRZ must come from the downtown business people and must be favoured by two thirds of all businesses affected (see Technical Resource 2), the actual approval of the bylaw is left to council's discretion. The approval of a BRZ bylaw, which results in the imposition of a special tax levy, is perhaps the most tangible indicator of council's support for, and commitment to, a strong downtown. Council's participation on the BRZ Board then becomes mandatory.

A discussion on the desirability for council's participation though representation on a Downtown Revitalization Committee is contained in the previous subsection. To briefly reiterate, council's participation results in:

- The attainment of a measure of authority and credibility resulting from the "official" status of a council representative.
- The attainment of a direct linkage with the most important policy and decision making body in your municipality.

- An increased potential for resource assistance if council is included in the action taking process.
- An increased potential for influencing and obtaining resource assistance from other levels of government.
- The inclusion, in most instances, of a significant downtown landowner with a vested interest in fostering a healthy and active downtown.

These reasons for council's participation through representation suggest that both council and downtown businessmen will benefit.

2. Municipal Growth Management and Development Strategy

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

A growth management and development strategy is effectively the sum total of all municipal policies which, in turn, affect all decisions, actions and regulations made, taken and imposed by council and its administration. Council's growth management and development strategy impacts all elements of a community including economic, social and physical elements. Because the functional interrelationships between the elements are also affected, a strategy can significantly influence the outcome of a revitalization program. It is extremely important, therefore, that the policies and actions comprising council's strategy ensure that downtown is maintained as the retail, business and social centre of the community without prejudicing the diverse needs of the residents.

The business expansion and recruitment component of a downtown revitalization program particularly lends itself, and in fact requires, council's support through policies and actions. Policies and actions which create conditions conducive and encouraging to expansion and new development in downtown should be considered.

Opportunities council may consider include:

- Assembly of vacant/under-utilized land for resale to developers.
- Assisting developers or downtown businessmen in consolidating land.
- Development incentives related to, for example, density and parking.
- Reduced offsite levies.
- Redevelopment levies aimed at needed local improvements.
- Public/private development partnerships.
- Promoting the community and downtown at trade fairs and conferences and in trade and financial magazines.
- Actually soliciting firms which provide the goods and services demanded by the consumer.

Although no one council can be expected to act upon all of the foregoing opportunities, at least some of the opportunities which are most feasible in your community should be considered. Other less arduous and complex methods for encouraging expansion and new development which also fall under the guise of municipal role include:

- Streamlining the development approval process.
- Ensuring knowledgeable and qualified staff is available to assist in the development process.
- Eliminating unnecessary red tape.
- Critically reviewing the Land Use Bylaw (LUB) to ensure that the provisions, standards and regulations are reasonable and not restrictive to expansion and new development.
- Being flexible in administering the LUB.

These methods should be considered when putting together a recruitment and development package as defined in the Viable Solutions Section of this Technical Resource Book.

Other policy principles that can affect downtown's viability and should be considered by council as part of a municipal growth management and development strategy are as follows:

- The greater the variety of social, business and other services provided in downtown, the more likely people will be attracted to downtown and the more adept downtown will become at functioning as the focus of community life - both in social and economic terms.

- New commercial development located outside downtown competes with and may undermine the retail strength of downtown. Although every community must provide for a commercial hierarchy to meet all the diverse needs of its residents, those new commercial developments which most appropriately belong downtown should not be permitted to locate elsewhere, unless there are unique and compelling reasons.
- Downtown provides a historic resource that could support and form a part of a comprehensive municipal tourism program. Council should ensure that the tourism potential and opportunities of downtown are fully utilized both at the local and regional levels. Opportunities for dovetailing a downtown revitalization program with a tourist program should be considered.

The growth management and development strategies of Alberta municipalities are embodied in the policies, goals and objectives of the General Municipal Plan (GMP). The GMP, therefore, reflects how council, and presumably the electorate, view their community, what things are important, what are the priorities. The legislative tool for implementing the policies, goals and objectives contained in the GMP, a statutory document approved by bylaw, is the Land Use Bylaw (LUB). All other statutory plans, including Area Redevelopment Plans and Area Structure Plans, complement the GMP and the LUB.

Although most community GMP's contain policies which appear to support a strong downtown, other policies which may conflict with and/or inadvertently undermine downtown's position may also be found in the same plan. For example, the policy objectives of one town's GMP suggest support for a strong downtown through policies such as:

> "The Town will endeavour to ensure that the existing downtown area continues to develop as an attractive community focus for administrative and cultural activities".
>
> and
>
> "The Town will encourage new major commercial facilities to locate within the downtown area and may assemble land for such purposes".

At the same time, however, the same GMP contains the following policy related to commercial development:

> "The development or redevelopment of the existing downtown area and the development of a major shopping centre outside of the downtown area will be supported."

This policy does indeed support development or redevelopment within downtown, but also supports the development of a major shopping centre outside downtown. The development of such a centre could seriously jeopardize the viability of downtown as the retail hub of the town, particularly since no restrictions as to timing of development versus population growth are included. Unless substantial residential growth occurs, a new shopping centre could capture a significant segment of the existing market in the town and threaten the continued viability of at least some downtown businesses. It should be recognized, however, that this town's GMP was prepared and adopted at a time of high growth rate. In today's growth climate, the policies would likely be reconsidered. Nevertheless, this example illustrates the types of conflicting policies which should be avoided in GMP's.

Municipal councils may, from time to time, make development decisions which belie the supportive downtown policies of their GMP without realizing the implications. Another town, for example, is contemplating the approval of a request to relocate a major department store out of downtown. The store is a significant magnet within downtown and its relocation could significantly affect the downtown economic base. Although council's decision may not contravene any specific GMP policy, the "intent" of certain policies may nevertheless be affected.

One method of ensuring that such potentially conflicting approvals and decisions are avoided is by "tightening" the definitions and regulations contained in the LUB to better reflect GMP policies. Recent amendments proposed to a town's LUB are indicative of the "tightening" process which can be considered.

This town's GMP recognizes the importance of precluding unwarranted competition to downtown. The Plan also recognizes the need to support a commercial hierarchy capable of meeting the diverse requirements of its residents. As such, the GMP contains certain "action" recommendations for "tightening" the LUB to better reflect the intent of the Plan. Examples of these changes to the LUB are as follows:

I. Action sought: To provide a clearer definition of the C-2 (Commercial-Vehicular Oriented) Land Use District and the permitted uses to ensure that only those uses which are particularly required by the motoring public and highway traffic are provided. The intent is to direct some of those uses which could function effectively downtown to downtown.

EXISTING

Definition
of General Purpose of
C-2 District

This district is generally intended to provide sites for the development of business areas intended to serve vehicular traffic ....

AMENDED

Definition
of General Purpose of
C-2 District

This district is generally intended to provide sites for the development of business areas intended to serve traffic and the motoring public ....

EXISTING

List of Permitted Uses

(1) Automobile Vehicles Sales
(2) Hotels
(3) Motels & Motor Hotels
(4) Private Clubs & Lodges
(5) Drive-in Businesses
(6) Eating & Drinking Establishments
(7) Accessory Buildings

AMENDED

List of Permitted Uses

(1) Motels & Motor Hotels
(2) Eating & Drinking Establishments
(3) Drive-in Businesses
(4) Gas Bars
(5) Minor Service Stations
(6) Accessory Buildings

II. Action sought: To provide a more precise definition of the C-4 (Commercial-Neighbourhood Retail Services) Land Use District to ensure that neighbourhood retail centres do indeed serve their intended function and that the centre be viable based on its own market area versus an extended market which may result in competition with the downtown.

EXISTING	AMENDED
Definition of General Purpose of C-4 District	**Definition of General Purpose of C-4 District**
This district is generally intended to provide sites for the development of local retail and service outlets which provide for the sale of a variety of goods and services in close proximity to residential areas.	**This district is generally intended to provide sites for the development of local convenience retail and service outlets which are intended to serve the day-to-day needs of residents within new neighbourhoods.**

III. Action sought: To amend the list of permitted and discretionary uses for the C-5 (Commercial-Shopping Centre) in order that commercial office, social and public institutional uses are encouraged to locate downtown.

EXISTING

List of Permitted Uses

Shopping centres which may include, but are not limited to:

(1) Gas Bars
(2) Fast Food Outlets
(3) Medical Clinics
(4) Professional & Financial Offices
(5) Personal Services Businesses
(6) Eating & Drinking Establishments
(7) Retail Stores
(8) Day Care Services
(9) Public Libraries
(10) Bakeries
(11) Liquor Stores

AMENDED

List of Permitted Uses

(1) Gas Bars
(2) Fast Food Outlets
(3) Auxiliary Office
(4) Personal Service Businesses
(5) Eating & Drinking Establishments
(6) Retail Stores
(7) Day Care Services
(8) Parking Areas
(9) Bakeries
(10) Liquor Stores
(11) Parks

EXISTING

List of Discretionary Uses

(1) Hotels
(2) Motels & Motor Hotels
(3) Private Clubs & Lodges
(4) Recreational Facilities
(5) Public Utility Buildings not Containing Offices

AMENDED

List of Discretionary Uses

None

The foregoing examples of LUB amendments are not drastic changes. The amendments do, however, better reflect the intent of the GMP to maintain downtown as the focus for the community.

3. Financial and Technical Resource Assistance

Because council must represent the interests of the entire community, any financial assistance directed towards a revitalization program must be approached with great caution. Council can not be seen as favouring or benefitting only one select segment of the community. Any assistance that may be provided is completely discretionary, and depends upon council's fiscal policies, the municipality's financial situation and the availability of revenues. The amount of revenue generated by the downtown property owners will also affect the potential for financial assistance.

If downtown is viewed as a community-wide resource, it is not uncommon for council to make some contributions to a revitalization program. In order for a program to be truly effective, however, a significant proportion of the necessary financing must come from the downtown business people. Cost sharing of certain aspects of a revitalization program could nevertheless be considered as a means of providing added incentive and encouragement to a group striving to achieve something that could ultimately benefit most of the community. Planning studies and/or the development of a physical design concept, are projects which particularly lend themselves to cost sharing, especially since the beautification of "public" lands is generally a significant component of a design concept. The BRZ legislation does permit council to contribute funds to a BRZ Board from general revenue or from money collected as payment pursuant to an offstreet parking levy if council so desires.

A less contentious, and possibly more appropriate, method by which council can assist a downtown revitalization program is by making available the technical resource skills of certain members of the town administration. Town staff is frequently an important source of data and information and often have the expertise, capability and "know-how" to undertake essential tasks. Often, things that must be done in preparing and implementing a revitalization program can be worked into, and form a part of, their day-to-day responsibilities. Although not a member of the administration, your designated regional planning commission or Municipal Affairs planner also may be of considerable assistance in formulating a revitalization program. The planner is generally responsible to council and council may make specific requests in terms of how the planner may assist in community planning matters. The City of Grande Prairie Municipal Council, for example, has directed that their designated planner serve as a resource person to the BRZ Board.

4. Public Improvements

The provision of public improvements results in an opportunity particularly suited to a public/private partnership between municipal council and the downtown business community. The approval of a BRZ bylaw is one approach to such a partnership. Required and/or desirable capital projects may also be provided through a local improvement levy.

Projects which can be considered under a local improvement levy, as defined by Sections 149 through 189 of the Municipal Taxation Act, and are applicable to downtown revitalization include:

- roadway improvements,
- sidewalk improvements,
- landscaping public property,
- maintaining public property,
- sanitary and storm sewer reconstruction,
- water main installation and/or reconstruction,
- power line installation,

- development of street malls, plazas and public walkways,
- land acquisition for, and development of, offstreet parking,
- street lighting and seasonal decorations,
- land acquisition for, and development of, parks,
- land acquisition for, and development of, recreational facilities,
- reconstruction of any local improvements after the lapse of its lifetime.

Local improvement taxes are generally imposed on the benefitting parcels on a "frontage assessment" basis.

Some improvements which benefit the community as a whole, such as an ornamental passive park facility, could form a part of the municipal capital works budget and be provided almost entirely out of general revenue. The cost sharing of improvements through a combination of such techniques has worked successfully in communities such as Nelson, B.C. Your town manager and engineer can provide ideas and advice on what approaches could be feasibly considered in your community.

On a strictly public basis, council can lend considerable support to a revitalization program by improving municipally owned buildings and sprucing up public property in downtown. Such a show of municipal support could encourage businesses to take similar action.

An important point to remember in considering council's role in the provision of local improvements is that the pumping of money into downtown by the public sector is never enough for revitalization to succeed and should be approached with caution. Deterioration of downtown has occurred over many years and the "quick-fix" approach of providing improvements will not result in instant vitality. More importantly, councils have, in the past, considered the infusion of public monies through the provision of improvements as their unique and single contribution to a revitalization program. Councils consider they have "done their share" and their involvement ends. Not only must the maintenance of the improvements be considered, however, but also council's continuing ongoing support of a revitalization program. The joint partnership approach to the provision of public improvements is the best method of ensuring the necessary ongoing involvement and support of council.

CONCLUSION

Now that you are organized for action and understand the roles each party plays in your public/private partnership, it is time to get to work and develop a viable, long term strategy for revitalizing your downtown. First you must evaluate and understand the local situation, and second, on the basis of your evaluation, you must develop a comprehensive action plan tailored to your particular needs. The remaining sections of this Technical Resource provide suggested techniques for evaluating your situation and ideas for, and examples of, viable solutions for revitalization that have worked well in other communities.

SECTION 2

EVALUATION

This section contains:

63 INTRODUCTION

65 UNDERSTANDING YOUR CONSUMER
- Survey Techniques
- Statistical Analysis
- Drawing Conclusions From Your Consumer Surveys

77 UNDERSTANDING YOUR COMPETITION
- Identifying the Competition
- Evaluating the Competition
- Drawing Conclusions on Your Competition

87 UNDERSTANDING YOUR DOWNTOWN
- Information Needs
- Drawing Conclusions on Your Information

99 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

103 APPENDIX

INTRODUCTION

The success of a downtown revitalization program can be directly attributed to identifying a solution that is appropriate for the local situation. The key to identifying an appropriate solution is having a thorough grasp and understanding of the problem. Answers to vital questions such as:

- **Who shops in your downtown?** How much sales support is there for the expansion of businesses?
- **Does your downtown provide the range of goods and services the shoppers need and demand?** Would a new camera store do well, for example, or would it likely close down in a few years? Should you emphasize bringing in new retail development or should other services be stressed?
- **Who is the competition of your downtown?** How much business is your competition actually taking away from the downtown? What advantages do they have and which can you duplicate?
- **What advantages can your downtown offer?** How can you utilize these? What kind of anchor store can you feasibly attract for a vacant building or parcel?
- **Are there barriers to downtown revitalization?** If you spend tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars on downtown beautification, street improvements or street furniture, are you likely to get it back in the form of increased revenues?

Answers to such questions are an absolute prerequisite to the development of a feasible strategy for your downtown.

In approaching the problem of revitalization, assume the project is a business venture. A critical tool in the success of any business venture is a comprehensive market analysis - a business approach to determining market needs. Many small town revitalization efforts have failed because this business approach was not taken. The market was not understood and a thorough evaluation of downtown was not done. The purpose of this Section is to:

- define what comprises a thorough evaluation of downtown; and
- describe how such an evaluation is done.

For the purposes of downtown revitalization, a thorough evaluation is comprised of three components:

- Understanding your consumer market.
- Understanding your competition.
- Understanding your downtown.

The extent to which you analyze and understand these three components, and the level of detail you achieve, will depend not only upon the extent and nature of your problem, but also upon the degree of commitment and the amount of resources available to you.

Each of the three components is intended to achieve the following:

- **Understanding your consumer market** - deals with who the consumers are, their shopping patterns, shopping preferences, likes and dislikes. The intent is to thoroughly understand whom you're dealing with and what they demand. This is key to determining what should be done.

- **Understanding your competition** - deals with identification of your competition, its function, its trade area and its locational and physical characteristics. The intent is to thoroughly understand where your competition is coming from (be it a shopping centre, strip centre development or neighbouring community), why it is successful, and what advantages it offers. This is key to determining both what could and should be done.

- **Understanding your downtown** - deals with the economic, functional and physical features which characterize your downtown. The intent is to thoroughly understand how your downtown functions, what are the problems, and what are its assets and liabilities. This is key to determining what could be done.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CONSUMER

A major objective of downtown revitalization is to increase or maintain its share of community and regional retail trade. The most effective means of achieving this is to increase or affect the "market positioning" of your consumer. "Market positioning" is a psychological idea, or emotional concept, defined as "owning a unique and competitively advantageous position in the consumers' mind".* Through skilled consumer research, you can determine what the consumer thinks about your downtown and your competition, and take appropriate actions to increase your "position" in their mind. In general, therefore, your research should tell you:

- What people think about the downtown?
- How do they feel about it?
- How do they feel about the competition?
- What makes them want to come downtown?
- Why do they shun it?

Specifically, your consumer research should identify the following:

- **Where do the consumers come from?** This will allow you to establish how significant a role your downtown plays in the community and surrounding environs, where your consumers come from, and what share of retail spending you could potentially capture.

- **How much of total consumer shopping is done in the downtown, and how much elsewhere?** This will establish if you have competition and how much retail trade is being captured by the competition.

- **What types of goods and services are purchased where?** This will help identify if the goods and services your downtown provides meet the needs of the consumer. This will also help establish if you should attempt to meet these needs or if you should complement, rather than compete with, other centres.

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* Alexander Laurence A., "CBD Analysis: Getting Downtown Positioned for a Bigger Share," Downtown Idea Exchange, August, 1984, page 3.

- **Frequency of shopping trips.** By establishing the frequency of shopping trips, you can determine if the downtown is used primarily for convenience shopping, for major large scale types of purchases, or for regular weekly shopping expeditions. Once again, this will help define your competition, if you are capturing your share of retail trade, and if the needs of the consumer can be met downtown.

- **Convenience of shopping in downtown.** This will allow you to determine which features need improving, which you can emphasize and build upon (your strengths and weaknesses), and if downtown is easy to get to, to get around in, and offers convenient parking.

- **What do consumers dislike about the downtown?** This will help you identify specific weaknesses and why the consumer may shun downtown.

- **What do consumers like about downtown?** This will help you determine what your strengths are, and what features should be maintained or further strengthened.

- **What improvements would the consumer like to see?** This will provide specific "hard core" data and factors to address in developing a plan and implementation strategy.

- **What do consumers like about the competition?** This will allow you to determine why the competition is drawing retail trade from downtown. This will also help identify which features of the competition downtown should duplicate, and which should be complemented.

- **What other activities do consumers come downtown for?** This will help establish what functions or roles downtown performs, and what you can do to bring more people into downtown more often.

The most expedient method for obtaining the foregoing information is by surveying your consumers. Two types of consumer surveys should be considered:

- The Household Survey.
- The Shoppers Survey.

The household survey involves surveying all households in your community and in the surrounding rural area. The shoppers survey involves surveying actual shoppers as they shop in the downtown and, possibly, in the competitive centre (if this is easily identifiable). Ideally, both types of surveys should be conducted by professionals knowledgeable in surveying techniques and interpretation. In actuality, however, your financial and manpower resources will determine:

- if both, or indeed any, surveys are conducted;
- how extensive the surveys are (how many households and/or shoppers are surveyed);
- the manner in which the surveys are administered; and,
- who assumes responsibility for the surveys.

Survey guidelines and techniques are provided later on. Sample surveys are included in the Appendix. If the surveys contemplated are not feasible, at the very least you should consider having downtown businessmen and merchants administer a very simple survey to their customers - a survey which deals with the most important issues such as:

- What you like and dislike about downtown?
- How much do you shop downtown?
- Do you shop at the competition and why?
- How could downtown be improved?

You should remember, however, that your results may be biased since only those shoppers who have already chosen to shop downtown will be approached. Those who do not shop downtown, or who do so infrequently, will not be considered. Nevertheless, a simple merchant survey will at least provide you with some ideas. Beware of making assumptions based upon hearsay and your perceived knowledge of your community without supporting survey data. Even a limited survey may be better than no survey at all, as long as you are aware of its limitations.

Survey Techniques

Two fundamental principles are applicable to both the household and shoppers survey:

- **Keep it simple.**
- **Keep it short.**

By ensuring the survey questions are easily understood and potential answers easily identifiable, you are more likely to get not only a greater response rate, but your responses will be more meaningful. By ensuring the survey is short, people will take the time to complete it. If it is too long, people will simply not bother. A household survey should take no longer than ten minutes on average to complete. The same principle applies to a shoppers survey. Shoppers are often in a hurry and prefer not to be unduly "bothered" by a surveyor. As such, a shopper's survey should be administered in two to five minutes. Even five minutes may be excessive depending upon the time of day and season.

HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

1. Whom to Survey

All households in your community and in the surrounding area should be surveyed to get the best consumer data. The limits of your surrounding area should be carefully chosen since this information will help you establish your trade area and identify any neighbouring communities which may be competing for retail trade. A trade area is the geographic area from which customers can be reasonably drawn. In defining what your trade area may be and, therefore, what area should be surveyed, consider both the length and the convenience of a shopping trip. Remember that a customer may prefer to travel twenty kilometres on good highways to shop downtown rather than ten kilometres if access is difficult and inconvenient. Consider seeking the assistance of your designated Alberta Municipal Affairs or regional planning commission planner. They often are familiar not only with your community, but with others as well and know what criteria normally define a trade area. Newspaper distributions also may provide input in determining how large an area to survey. Once you have decided upon a potential area, outline the area on a map for easy reference and working purposes.

Although a household survey need not necessarily be administered to the entire community and surrounding trade area, remember that the incremental cost of doing so may be relatively small. Incremental cost is comprised of making copies, postage and tabulating responses. Once the survey is formulated and a system is devised for tabulation, the incremental cost of surveying 2,000 households is not significantly greater than if only 1,000 households were surveyed.

A major problem which must be addressed if only a partial household survey is conducted is the determination of a representative sample size. Representative samples, which vary according to population, are difficult to establish in small communities because with fewer people, a greater percentage is required to ensure no bias. Other factors such as location and age of the representative sample become extremely important. The analysis becomes more complex as a result and may not provide a complete and meaningful picture. Also, news of the survey may be spread through "word of mouth" and those not surveyed may be offended.

Remember, total community support for downtown revitalization is desirable and the survey is an excellent tool for letting people know that something is happening. Rather than expending your efforts and financial resources on identifying what constitutes a representative cross-sectional sample, therefore, it is recommended that the entire community be surveyed. In larger communities, of more than 5,000, this may be more difficult to accomplish and a partial survey may have to suffice. Assistance in selecting whom to survey should be obtained from either a qualified consultant or your designated planner to ensure a representative cross-section of your population.

2. What You Should Ask

The household survey should ask questions which will allow you to determine what the consumers think about downtown - what they like and dislike, and how they feel about the competition. The series of questions listed earlier provide specific examples of what to ask. The questions must be easily understood and structured in a manner which will ensure meaningful responses. The most expedient method of doing so is to provide a choice of answers. The respondents can thus be steered into a desired thought process and provide the type of information you are seeking. This is particularly true where objective answers are required. For opinions, or more subjective types of information, you may include some questions where the respondent must supply, rather than select, a response. Such questions, however, must be kept to a minimum. If a respondent is required to put too much effort into a survey, it may not be completed. Leave room for "additional comments". The amount of effort expended is then left to the discretion of the respondent.

In structuring your survey, remember that a system for coding or tabulating responses should be considered. Again, by providing a set choice of answers, the coding task is made easier. The assistance of a professional familiar with tabulating and analyzing survey responses could be of considerable assistance in structuring such a survey.

A sample household survey is included in the Appendix. This survey was developed for, and used in, the Town of Stony Plain. The survey serves as a useful example and can be adapted to any community. Remember, however, that the questions asked should be a applicable to your situation. Specific questions to address specific and unique concerns should be included. In the Stony Plain survey for example, a specific question dealing with the impact of a proposed Safeway shopping mall was included.

3. How to Administer the Survey

A household survey may be administered in one of two ways - by mail, or door-to-door. By far the most cost efficient and expedient method is by mail. Remember to include a covering letter which states:

- The purpose of the survey.
- Whom its being done for.
- Deadline for responses.
- A sincere request for assistance and cooperation.

Include a business reply envelope with postage prepaid. Addresses and names may be obtained from your municipal tax assessment roll. For the surrounding area, names and addresses are available through the tax roll of the rural municipality where your community is located. The assistance of town administrative staff or other volunteers may be solicited for the manual task of copying, addressing and mailing out the surveys. The assistance of your local newspaper may also be solicited in encouraging people to respond by stressing the importance of the survey.

4. What to do with Responses

First, determine if you have a statistically valid response rate. A statistically valid response rate is defined as the number of responses needed to make your survey meaningful and is usually expressed as a percentage. The percentage figure is related to population. Generally, the larger the population, the lower the required response rate. Table 1 provides a rule of thumb guideline for the percentage of survey responses required by population. If a valid response rate is not obtained, you may consider a follow-up telephone campaign reminding people to send in their responses and stressing the importance of the survey. Again, you may consider including an "appeal" in the local newspaper. In some instances (for the handicapped or elderly), you should offer to have someone pick up the completed survey.

TABLE 1

GUIDELINES FOR VALID RESPONSE RATE FOR HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

POPULATION	REPRESENTATIVE PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION REQUIRED FOR VALID RESPONSE RATE
100	80
400	50
800	32
1,200	24
1,800	18
2,200	15
3,000	11
4,000	9
5,000	7
6,000	6

Beyond 6,000 population, percentage remains at approximately 6 percent.

Once you have a statistically valid response rate, the responses must be tabulated or coded. This can be done either by computer or manually depending upon your resources, your responses, and how the survey was structured. Special care requiring professional assistance must be taken in structuring a survey which will be entered into a computer. Generally, however, the tabulation or recording of actual results is a labour intensive exercise requiring little skill. Specialized consultants or professionals are required only for supervision, if at all.

Tabulate the results for each question. In most cases, these tabulated responses can be translated into percentages. For those questions which require written verbal responses, list the responses under certain selected categories such as parking, architecture, and advertising, and identify the percentage frequency for each category. Record the frequency both in relation to the number of responses (how often an item was cited) and to one another. This technique will make the analysis easier and may require some professional input. Once you have recorded your responses, you are ready to analyze and draw conclusions.

SHOPPERS SURVEY

1. Whom to Survey

The shoppers survey is aimed at shoppers or users of downtown and of the competition, assuming this competition is located within the community and is easily identifiable. The primary focus, however, is on downtown shoppers. The number of persons surveyed will depend upon the size of your community and your resources. Manpower, as well as financial resources are important recognizing that these surveys require personal interviews. In Stony Plain, with a population of approximately 5,500, 263 shoppers participated in a downtown and competing mall survey representing , through their families, 897 persons.

Interestingly enough, 50 percent of those surveyed were nonresidents of Stony Plain living in the surrounding rural area. If nothing else, the shoppers survey emphasized the importance of small town downtowns to rural residents far more emphatically than the household survey did. Since most of the households surveyed were located within the community, the significance of the rural population's dependence upon the downtown was not as obvious. The Stony Plain shoppers survey was conducted over a two day period - Friday and Saturday. Saturday is traditionally the day in Alberta when farm people come to town to shop and play.

2. What You Should Ask

As in a household survey, a shoppers survey is intended to find out how the consumer feels about downtown and the competition. The main impetus of the shoppers survey, however, is to determine what downtown improvements are needed and why shoppers are shopping at the competition rather than in downtown. Questions which should be asked in a shopper's survey conducted in downtown include:

- Location of residence?
- Purpose of visit - business/shopping/pleasure?
- Frequency of shopping done in downtown - elsewhere - where?
- Improvements which would increase shopping frequency (provide list)?
- Improvements to increase pleasure use (provide list)?

Include short questions which address specific problems, concerns or features which may be unique to your downtown.

A survey for shoppers in a competing mall may be similar to the downtown shoppers survey except that it can be assumed their purpose for being there is to shop and you are more interested in comparisons . In other words, why are they shopping at the mall and not in the downtown?

Questions which should be asked in a competing mall survey include:

- Place of residence?
- Frequency of shopping in mall?
- Proportion of shopping done in mall or downtown or elsewhere?
- Why do you shop here (provide list)?
- What improvements to downtown would make you shop there (provide list)?

Apply the same rules to structuring your survey questionnaire as for the household survey. Always keep in mind how the answers will be tabulated to allow for a meaningful analysis. It is particularly important to keep your survey short and simple since you are directly approaching people who may be in a hurry and do not want to take the time to ponder a question extensively. A sample shoppers survey for both the downtown and the competition is provided in the Appendix.

3. How to Administer the Survey

Two methods are available for administering a shopping survey. The method chosen will depend upon your resources. The two methods include:

- Personal interviews with one or more selected interviewers approaching shoppers.
- Merchants and/or staff approaching customers in their store.

The former method will result in less bias since a wider variety of shoppers can be surveyed and the process is less personal. Customers may not feel comfortable expressing true concerns to merchants because of obvious merchant bias. The use of interviewers is also more expedient since merchants and staff have little time to spare on busy shopping days, and in all likelihood, shopping centre merchants will not want to participate.

The surveyors or interviewers need not be professionals. They could be town staff or simply volunteers. They should not, however, be members of your Committee since, once again, biased responses may result if Committee members are well known. One advantage of having "out-of-towners" conduct the survey is that no one knows them. Conversely, shoppers in small towns may not like to be approached by strangers. Who is best suited to conduct the personal interviews will depend upon your community. Regardless, the interviewer must be courteous and capable of offering guidance or assistance in answering questions without actually leading those interviewed.

The shoppers survey should be conducted on busy shopping days such as Friday or Saturday. A two day period is more desirable than one since a better representation of shopping patterns and preferences will result. In downtown, surveys should be conducted outdoors in a busy place with high pedestrian traffic flows such as mainstreet. If the weather is inclement, choose a number of businesses which cater to a large and varied consumer market, such as a general store, liquor store or bank. Remember to get owners' approval if indoor surveys are conducted. The approval of shopping mall managers should also be obtained.

4. What to do With Responses

The same guidelines for tabulating, coding and summarizing responses which apply to the household survey also apply to the shoppers survey, excepting the need for a statistically valid response rate. This survey is intended to augment the household survey and is oriented more towards determining why consumers shop, or do not shop, in the downtown or at the competition. Where a household survey is not undertaken, the analysis of these responses will at least provide some indication of what must be done to get more consumers shopping downtown more often.

Statistical Analysis

Your household and shoppers surveys may identify gaps in the availability of goods and services in downtown. These gaps will help identify what businesses should be recruited to downtown in order to meet the consumer's needs. Before recruitment is considered, however, a statistical analysis of your consumers which provides a profile of their characteristics should be considered in order to provide the necessary back-up for recruiting a particular business. For example, if a children's store is deemed to be a desirable addition to downtown, you must be capable of proving statistically to a prospective retailer that your trade area can support such an outlet. A statistical profile should consider characteristics such as age, sex, family size, average family income, male to female ratios and age distributions. This data can be developed by a professional resource person with the assistance of Alberta Bureau of Statistics, Statistics Canada and Canada Post and may reveal other significant gaps such as a ladies fashion shop catering to women fifty years of age and over. Remember, a statistical profile must be specific to the type of business you want to recruit. The Business Recruitment portion of the Viable Solutions Section of this Technical Resource Book explains when such a profile may be required.

Drawing Conclusions From Your Consumer Surveys

Once the responses have been tabulated and summarized, you are ready, with professional assistance, to draw your conclusions. Previously formulated conclusions on trade area can be modified accordingly. Although the responses will vary for each community, some can be anticipated and are generally common to most small communities with economically stagnant downtowns. The major difference will be in emphasis - what appears to be of greatest concern or perceived as a major problem by the consumer. Emphasis will also vary depending upon the nature of the competition. It is the emphasis, or what is most important, which will help you identify a solution which is meaningful and uniquely addresses your situation. As such, you must prioritize and consider your conclusions carefully. The Viable Solutions Section of this Technical Resource Book describes solutions to some major problems identified by similar consumer surveys.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR COMPETITION

The purpose for understanding your competition is fundamentally simple - why is it (the competition) successfully competing with downtown. But first, prior to addressing the fundamental issue, you must determine if in fact you are in competition. Competition means vying for the same consumer market share of retail trade and can occur only where the same level of goods and services are provided. Understanding your competition involves two basic steps:

- .Identifying the competition.
- .Evaluating the competition.

Identifying the Competition

You likely already have some idea if you have competition and where it is coming from. The consumer and business surveys provide excellent methods of identification. In most small Alberta towns, competition takes one of two forms:

1. A neighbouring or nearby community (be it their downtown or a shopping centre).
2. Shopping or highway strip centres within your own community.

In determining if you are actually competing for the same segment of retail trade, certain factors should be considered. The factors considered will depend upon the source of competition.

1. Competing Community

The trade area of communities and their ability to attract consumer dollars is dependent upon the level of goods and services provided. To assist in understanding this basic principle and how it applies to competition, you should understand the trade area hierarchy. Your planner or economist can assist you in this understanding and identify where you fit into the hierarchy. This need not involve extensive study and investigation. You are, after all, concerned only with ensuring that you and a neighboring community are competing on the same level. Often, the size alone of that community will tell you if you are in competition.

A trade hierarchy is comprised of three classes of trade or service area and is based upon the level of goods and services provided by the urban centre of each. Usually the class of a trade area is directly related to the population of its urban centre - the larger the centre, the larger the trade area.

Class 1: The centres of Class 1 trade areas provide the highest and most specialized order of goods and services, many of which are used rarely by most households. Examples of such specialized goods and services include cancer clinics, architectural services and large wholesale furniture outlets. The centres are usually cities with populations in excess of 25,000, with large trade areas encompassing numerous smaller urban centres. The most dominant Class 1 type centres in Alberta are Edmonton and Calgary with trade areas encompassing virtually the entire Province.

Class 2: The centres of Class 2 trade areas provide some specialized and higher order of goods and services. These centres often contain regionalized provincial and federal government facilities and are referred to as regional centres. The goods and services provided are used occasionally by most households and examples include appliances and legal services. Class 2 trade areas generally encompass one or more Class 3 type centres.

Class 3: The centres of Class 3 trade areas provide the basic daily needs of the consumer market with only limited, if any, specialization and provision of higher order goods. The low order of goods and services provided are used frequently by all households. Examples include the post office, general apparel stores and grocery outlets. The centre's trade area is usually limited to the centre itself and the surrounding environs. The extent of the trade area in any direction is usually defined by the proximity of other Class 3 centres.

The foregoing definition of trade area hierarchy is very generalized and simplistic but is adequate for purposes of identifying sources of competition. Obviously, the boundaries of the three classes of trade areas can overlap and there may be many exceptions to this hierarchical definition as well as "grey" areas.

The basic, general rule that applies in terms of competition is that, as a whole, Class 3 type centres cannot compete with Class 2 centres, nor can Class 2 centres compete with Class 1 centres. Competition can occur, however, between different Class centres for those goods and services common to both. A Class 3 centre, therefore, may be competing with a neighbouring Class 2 centre where the latter is drawing consumers from the former for purchases which could be made in the smaller centre. The Class 2 centre is capturing some segment of retail trade from the Class 3 centre. Obviously, the Class 2 centre is providing something the Class 3 centre is not - something that inspires the consumer to travel a greater distance. What that something is will need to be identified and evaluated in order to find what the Class 3 centre needs in order to compete.

2. Competing Centre Within Your Community

A competing shopping form within your community is usually easily identifiable. Again, it is important that you first ensure that you are in competition and not performing different functions or meeting different needs. Your planner or economist can assist you in determining what function or needs are met by the perceived competition. Remember, the basic criterion of competition is that generally, the same level of goods and services must be provided. If your competition, be it a highway strip centre, shopping centre, or both, provides the same goods and services as the downtown and is taking your share of retail trade, you are obviously in competition. If a different level of goods and services is provided, you may be meeting different market needs and competition may be only perceived rather than real. You must then look at other factors which are causing a loss in downtown trade. For example, a highway strip centre may provide auto related goods and services not contained within downtown, Downtown and the strip centre are not, therefore, competing. Often, however, such developments will serve to attract other types of new retail outlets which end up replacing older, similar outlets in the downtown - now you have competition. Also consider if you should be providing auto related outlets so you can be more competitive. Your household survey once again is an excellent source of information for identifying local competition.

Service and size become important factors to consider in determining if downtown is competing with a shopping centre. The most common example in smaller Alberta municipalities today is the development of a mall with a large supermarket anchor, usually a national or international chain such as Safeway. A Safeway provides a marketing strategy and type of service which is difficult, if not impossible, for a smaller, independent downtown grocer to emulate. They are not, therefore, really in competition even though the small grocer is most likely losing retail dollars to Safeway. The point is that the small grocer cannot effectively compete with Safeway on the same level. The small grocer, therefore, must learn to complement what Safeway provides through techniques such as personalized service and the provision of specialized goods with a local flavour. In order to determine what downtown small businessmen can do to either compete with, or complement, a shopping centre facility, you must first understand how such facilities operate.

Evaluating the Competition

By evaluating your competition, you can determine why you are losing retail trade to the competition. In other words, what does the competition offer that downtown does not. Once you have identified what advantageous features it offers, you must then identify which you can duplicate to your advantage and which you can complement. At the same time, your evaluation should identify what features downtown can provide that the competition is lacking. The personal level of service is an example of one such feature. The evaluation, rather than the identification, is where your resources can best be concentrated. The evaluation may be of considerable use in developing a viable solution. As such, the actual evaluation should be undertaken or supervised by your professional resource person(s). The nature and extent of your evaluation will depend upon the form of your competition, how severe the competition is, and your available resources.

1. Other Downtowns

Evaluating the downtown of a neighbouring community which may be drawing your share of retail trade and, therefore, reducing your trade area, is more difficult than evaluating a competing shopping centre or strip centre, particularly where the neighbouring community is a higher order Class 2 centre. You must rely upon your own knowledge and/or the advise of your professional(s) to determine how to best approach the problem, particularly since:

- the circumstances will differ markedly in each situation; and,
- carrying out inventories and business surveys similar to those used for competing shopping centres may be expensive and time-consuming.

Businessmen within your community and Committee members may be able to provide some input. Your household survey is also a good source of information. A simple field survey, which entails that your professional and some Committee members spend one day, (preferably a busy shopping day such as Saturday), in the competing downtown and take note of such factors as physical features, displays in stores that are attracting a large clientele, price comparisons, parking availability, advertising for promotional events, types of businesses and focal points, is probably as much as you can do.

In many instances, a competing downtown will offer a higher level of goods and services, and by virtue of attracting consumers from your trade area for these goods and services, can also retain some share of sales of those goods and services which are common to both downtowns. For example, a customer travelling to a neighbouring Class 2 downtown to purchase a freezer, may choose to purchase groceries and some clothing articles there as well, even though these could be purchased within your downtown. Downtowns providing a higher order of goods and services and, therefore, catering to a larger trade area and meeting a wider range of consumer needs, are usually busier places than small downtowns and can afford to provide more variety and even lower prices for the same goods and services. Your downtown may have one ladies clothing shop providing a limited selection and "line" of merchandise.

A larger downtown may have three or four such shops, each competing with the other and allowing for a wider selection, more comparison shopping, and possibly lower prices. Because such downtowns are difficult to compete with, you will be required to provide something special to retain retail dollars within your community and increase local consumer "market positioning", such as unique lines, attractive shopping areas, a popular theme, personalized service, or numerous appealing promotional events which will keep more people interested and involved in their own local downtown.

2. Shopping/Highway Strip Centres

The identification of the general advantages of shopping centres and highway strip centres is not difficult. The usual advantages which characterize such centres include:

- Single ownership allowing for a comprehensive marketing and promotional strategy under the direction of a centre manager.
- Joint advertising policies.
- Ample convenient parking.
- Flexible leasing terms.
- Lower prices.
- More chain stores which prefer to lease space built specifically to their specifications.

Enclosed malls have the added advantage of climate control and a safe, clean and attractive environment. Climate control is an important advantage during Alberta's winters and difficult for downtowns to provide except at exorbitant cost. Shopping strips and malls also are often located along highways or major roads and, therefore, are more accessible than downtown. Finally, such facilities may have the advantage of an "anchor" tenant which serves to draw consumers to the centre.

Your household and shoppers surveys will tell you how the consumer perceives the advantages of shopping centre facilities and how important a role they play in attracting sales. Many of these advantages stem from single ownership and are difficult for downtowns, comprised of numerous small, independent businessmen, to duplicate. Considerable cooperation is required, for example, to develop and implement a coordinated marketing approach . In order to do so, a more detailed evaluation of your competition may be required.

A more detailed evaluation involves an inventory or investigation of your competition and, depending upon the nature of your competition and the relationship between the competition and the downtown, may be augmented by a short and simple survey.

2a) Inventory

An inventory of your competition should include the following information:

- Types of businesses.
- Name of businesses.
- Range of goods and/or services.
- Price of selected goods and services.
- Merchandising techniques.
- Rent/square foot for comparable space.

This inventory information need not be comprehensive, but should be sufficiently representative by "type of business" to allow you to make a comparative evaluation with similar "types of businesses" located downtown. If you choose to go to this level of detail, an economic or marketing consultant may be of considerable assistance in determining what information should be gathered depending upon your circumstance and household survey results. For example, if most households responded that they shopped at the competition because of lower prices, you should concentrate on investigating the pricing structure of your competition. A qualified consultant can also help you use the information in a meaningful way in developing a viable solution. An inventory, which involves actual on site investigation and information gathering or discussions with the manager, may become cumbersome and overly complex if not handled by someone with economic marketing expertise. The inventory information can be used in one of two ways:

- To identify those gaps in goods and services which are demanded by the consumer and could just as easily be located in downtown as in a competing centre. This is not to imply that major new development should be contemplated, but rather that suitable uses should be recruited utilizing available existing space. Also, downtown merchants may find that by changing their line of merchandise to better meet and respond to the demands of the consumer, they are able to compete more effectively.

. To itemize those physical characteristics common to most shopping malls such as ample parking, climate control and an attractive, clean environment, and to consider these features in formulating the physical improvement component of a comprehensive downtown revitalization package.

2b) Competition Survey

A survey of the businessmen located in the competing shopping centre or highway strip should consist of two interrelated questions:

- Why did you choose to locate here instead of downtown?
- What could the downtown offer to entice you to relocate?

This is valuable information for determining what is necessary for creating an environment to attract new businesses and, even more importantly, retain those that already exist. The survey must be very short since these businessmen have no particular reason or vested interest in responding. Detailed, factual information may not be willingly provided and a request for such information could create suspicion. The feasibility of conducting this type of survey depends upon the relationship of the shopping centre manager and merchants with downtown merchants, and possibly council. You may wish to gain the support of the Chamber of Commerce in conducting the survey through your Chamber representative. The Chamber usually represents all business interests in a community and may be better received by the shopping centre manager and merchants. Regardless of who approaches the competing businesses, they must be courteous, pleasant and diplomatic.

Drawing Conclusions on Your Competition

Understanding your competition will allow you to draw conclusions which answer the fundamental question of why they are successfully competing with downtown. The most important information relates to their advantageous features, those which you could duplicate to your own advantage. Your professional resource person will be able to assist in identifying which you can feasibly duplicate. These feasible advantages should be listed according to the major components of the downtown revitalization program, be they economic (marketing, promotion, recruitment) or physical, and should be carefully considered in developing economic and physical improvement programs for downtown. Remember to be practical in that there are some advantages that are unique to shopping centres. Shopping centres do meet certain needs of the consumer which a downtown simply cannot. Also, list those disadvantages of your competition which you may not share and consider how you can use this to your advantage. A shopping centre, for example, has no sense of community or history. This is one of downtown's greatest assets and, through proper emphasis, could be an important tool for promoting successful competition.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR DOWNTOWN

One of the most important prerequisites to developing a program for downtown revitalization is to thoroughly understand your downtown. A strategic assessment of what is in downtown, what are the problems, what makes it "tick", how it functions and what role it plays in the community provides a foundation for building a strategy suited to your downtown.

In order to have a firm understanding of downtown you need to know:

- **What's in the downtown?**
  - What uses are encompassed?
  - Where are these uses located within downtown?

  Addressing these questions requires an inventory of land use, be it retail commercial, service commercial, service outlets, institutional uses such as government facilities and churches, and recreational uses such as bowling alleys and parks. By establishing what is there and where uses are located, you can determine if the goods and services demanded by the consumer are available, what other facilities are located downtown, what facilities draw people downtown, obvious land use and functional patterns, and where the focal points or busiest and most popular places are located.

- **What is the physical state of the downtown?**
  - What do the buildings look like?
  - How old are they?
  - What state of repair are they in?
  - Can they be renovated or should they be redeveloped?
  - Is an architectural theme apparent?
  - Are there any interesting historic buildings?
  - Are the roads, parking, and sidewalks adequate?
  - Are the municipal services adequate?
  - Can existing municipal services accommodate additional expansion or new development?
  - Is downtown attractive or is it dirty?

These questions, when answered, will form the basis of a physical design concept, and identify what you have to start with, what you have to work with, and what major and cosmetic improvements are required.

. **How does downtown operate?**
  - Is there a common merchandising theme?
  - What are the store hours?
  - What form does advertising take?
  - Are there any promotional events?
  - Are there numerous absentee landlords?
  - Is downtown a "dead" place in the evening?
  - Are any businesses doing particularly well? Why?

Answers to such questions provide a starting point for a coordinated approach to merchandising, advertising and promotion as well as clues as to how downtown functions and why it may not be getting its share of retail trade.

. **What is downtown's function?**
  - What role does it play in the community?
  - Is it used mainly for convenience shopping?
  - Is it a business centre?
  - Is it used as a social gathering place?
  - Does it draw the community together?
  - What uses are most popular and well utilized?
  - Does it have a significant historic value?

Answers to these questions will help identify potential resources and, possibly, a theme for an image which can be used in developing both the economic and physical aspects of a viable solution. The features or strengths which are important to the community can be identified and enhanced to increase downtown's functional significance. If, for example, it is a place where people go to be seen, this could be encouraged by physically allowing for more pedestrian interaction or adding coffee bars and kiosks.

- **What is the current state of development?**
  - Have there been any new developments or proposals in recent years?
  - Are there many turnovers?
  - Is there a lot of vacant land?
  - Why is it vacant?
  - Is there a lot of vacant building space? Why?
  - Are there too many old dilapidated buildings which are basically an eyesore?
  - Is downtown underdeveloped?

  Answers to such questions will allow you to address some of the weaknesses in downtown and identify potential locations where new development could be directed through market recruitment. Barriers to development can also be identified. For example, you could identify and contact the owner of a vacant or rundown parcel to see why it is not moving or being developed and determine if you and your council can assist in any way. You could go one step further and undertake the demolition, with municipal support, of badly rundown buildings which are both an eyesore and a public danger, and then work on marketing the property.

- **How do the land use bylaw and other controls affect downtown?**
  - Are the land use bylaw provisions flexible enough to accommodate development and expansion or do they act as a deterrent?
  - Are parking policies too stringent?
  - Do businessmen feel council is working for them, or against them?

  Answers to such questions will allow you to establish if current land use policies respond to the needs of downtown or are prohibitive to new development or even expansion. The same applies to all municipal regulations and bylaws. The answers will help identify where changes may be beneficial and what businessmen require. Also, they will help establish if additional business tax levies will be well received and what municipal incentives could be incorporated into a solution to stimulate activity.

- **What can you expect downtown businessmen to contribute towards revitalization?**
  - Will they volunteer their time and energy?
  - Will they contribute financially through taxes?

  Answers to such questions will allow you to establish what solutions may be economically feasible. Financial contribution is a further measure of commitment in that initially enthusiasm will be evident but may wane when contributions are requested. The answers will also allow you to gauge what the business people can afford.

These questions are intended to illustrate the depth to which a thorough understanding and evaluation of downtown can be taken. The questions you ask, and the manner in which the answers are applied, will depend upon your downtown and its unique characteristics, problems and functions. Your resources also will influence how indepth an evaluation can be undertaken. Remember, however, that at least some evaluation resulting in an understanding of your downtown will be required to work out any viable solutions.

Information Needs

To assist you in understanding downtown and the issues that must be addressed, some basic data and information is needed. First, you need to know what's there - what are the characteristics of downtown - what factors make it tick? Second, you need to know what the business people think - how do they perceive their downtown - what issues do they feel need attention - what are their priorities? The first type of information - what's there - is objective in nature and can be collected through a relatively simple inventory process. The second type is subjective - you require opinions and perceptions - and can be obtained by administering a survey to all downtown businesses. The survey can also be used to augment the information collected by the inventory process.

The collection of information using either inventory or survey techniques is not so much a difficult task as it is time consuming. Professional, highly qualified persons may not be required to accomplish this task. Consider tapping your town administrative staff for advise and assistance as well as actual information. Depending upon your financial and other resources, however, you may wish to obtain the services of a planner and/or economist to assist you in understanding the relevance of the information and drawing meaningful conclusions. Such professionals are trained to evaluate information and identify the relevant interrelationships and issues as well as potential solutions. Downtown, after all, is a complex subject and can not be treated lightly.

Regardless of how you decide to approach your evaluation, remember that information is needed. Techniques for undertaking an inventory of downtown and a survey of downtown businesses are described below.

1. The Inventory Process

The first step in the inventory process is to define the area you are working with - what are the boundaries of your downtown? Factors which can define boundaries include land use, assessment, physical barriers (transportation and geographical) and limitations to growth. Your working area boundary should be defined by the Committee with the assistance of your technical or professional resource persons.

Remember that the boundary can be adjusted as you proceed but you must have a starting point. This will allow you to undertake the second step, the preparation of a good working legal base map or plan. This is important since most of your itemized information can be recorded directly on to the maps allowing for easy reading and quick interpretation.

Once these two steps have been completed, you are ready to collect information and record it accordingly. Whoever is assigned this task need not have any specific training, although familiarity with the community would likely prove beneficial. Where applicable, information should be collected under the supervision of your professional resource person(s). The information items which should be collected, the purpose of each, and potential sources are listed on Table 2. This information should be recorded for each lot or parcel where applicable.

TABLE 2

DOWNTOWN INVENTORY

DATA ITEM	DESCRIPTION	PURPOSE	POTENTIAL SOURCES
Land Use	Commercial, Industrial Residential, Institutional Recreation/Open Space.	. Understanding Land Use . Functional Inter-relationships	. Field Survey
Type of Business	List specific type, be it bakery, hairdresser, professional office, etc.	. Merchandising Strategy . Understanding Land Use . Availability of Goods and Services	. Business Survey
Name of Business	Name of actual occupant(s).	. Business Survey Mailout	. Telephone Directory . Municipal Records
Address	Mailing address.	. Business Survey Mailout	. Telephone Directory . Municipal Records
Uses Allowed	As per Land Use Bylaw.	. Understanding Land Use	. Land Use Bylaw
Land Ownership	Legal owner of property.	. Identify Absentee Owners . For Financial Evaulation	. Assessment Records
Assessment	Taxes generated.	. For Financial Evaluation . Where Resources Come From/Go	. Assessment Records
Vacant Parcels	Include underutilized, i.e. where most of parcel is vacant and not used.	. Understanding Land Use	. Field Survey
Building Condition	Rate according to poor, fair, good, excellent.	. Input for Physical Design Concept . Potential Renovation	. Field Survey
Building Age	Will reflect condition.	. Input for Physical Design Concept . Historical/Condition	. Assessment Records . Business Survey
Historic Building	Those which could be investigated for historic significance.	. Help Identify Theme/ Focal Point . Historical/Condition	. Field Survey . Business Survey
Road Hierarchy	Major entrance/exit routes, truck routes, local road.	. Input for Circulation Study . Understanding Land Use	. Town Engineer
Parking Areas	Parking lots/on street parking (parallel or angle), meter parking.	. Input for Circulation Study . Understanding Land Use	. Field Survey . Town Engineer
Municipal Services	Location and size of water, sanitary and storm sewer lines.	. Input for Design Concept . Understanding Land Use	. Town Engineer

2. The Business Survey

The business survey involves surveying, through the use of a comprehensive questionnaire, all the businesses (retail and service) located in your downtown. Because the main thrust of the survey is to gather opinions, this may prove to be your most valuable information source for identifying a viable solution that will be palatable to those most directly affected by a downtown revitalization program. Similar to the consumer survey, the number of businesses surveyed and the depth of the survey questionnaire will be influenced by your resources and your particular situation.

2a) Whom to Survey

All downtown businesses should be surveyed. Total participation and commitment is required for a successful program and the survey provides an excellent tool for getting people involved. The survey can encourage businessmen to work cohesively towards a common goal. Undertaking a total survey is not an insurmountable task since most small town downtowns contain a relatively limited number of businesses. The City of Leduc, for example, with a population of 12,000, surveyed all 187 businesses encompassed by downtown as part of their Central Area Study. Once the questionnaire and method of tabulation are established, it is just as easy to survey 100 businesses as 50. The additional incremental cost is minimal and there is no potential for bias.

2b) What You Should Ask

Your business survey will be far more comprehensive than your consumer surveys. Because downtown businessmen and merchants will be directly affected by a revitalization program and will be required to directly participate and cooperate, it is essential that they be given an opportunity to express their concerns and opinions. Also, because the entire project is being undertaken on their behalf, it is incumbent upon them to take the time to complete an indepth survey.

Much of the information collected through the survey will be used in identifying a viable solution comprised of an economic scheme, a design concept and an implementation strategy, as well as potential financial contributions. Your survey is intended to provide different levels of information including:

- Objective information - is data input to be used as part of the design solution, to augment your inventory, and for your land use and circulation study. Objective information is not concerned with "opinions". This is factual data. Examples include questions on square footage leased, number of employees, and rent/square foot.

- Subjective information - is intended to solicit opinion on how businessmen feel about the downtown, what are its problems and what is its potential. For example, questions such as, "does the downtown look rundown", will result in a subjective response.

- Behavioral resource information - is intended to identify how much the businessmen are willing to do themselves to improve their situation and how much they are willing to contribute towards a comprehensive program. This is a test of commitment.

A sample business survey prepared for the Stony Plain downtown study is included in the Appendix. This survey is very comprehensive and the responses were used primarily by the planning and economic consultants hired by the Town and the Downtown Committee as input for the preparation of a downtown plan.

The following areas are covered by the Stony Plain business survey:

- Nature of business in the downtown.
- Buildings in the downtown.
- Roadway system and parking in the downtown.
- Availability of goods and services, merchandising and promotion of the downtown.
- Feasibility of redevelopment in the downtown.
- Existing land use regulations affecting the downtown.

. Views on development incentives for the downtown.
. Views on priorities for improving the downtown.
. Views on activities of different organizations.
. Levels of government affecting the downtown.

The Stony Plain business survey is suitable for adaptation to other downtowns although, once again, the business survey you administer in your downtown should meet your particular needs and address your unique circumstance.

2c) How to Administer the Survey

Surveys should be mailed out to all downtown businesses along with a covering letter from the committee. Names and addresses of businesses should be available from your inventory. The covering letter should state:

. Purpose of the survey.
. Who the survey is being done for.
. Who is participating (i.e. all downtown businessmen).
. Deadline date.
. Method of collection.
. Importance of completing survey.
. Plea for assistance.
. Confidentiality of information.

The importance of completing the survey and the plea for assistance must be particularly stressed. You could also consider advising businessmen and merchants that a summary of response will be mailed out to all those who participated. Whether or not a summary is prepared and mailed out will depend on your resources.

The advantage of a summary mailout is that respondents can determine if their opinions are shared by others and are more likely to participate knowing their input will be used and something will be received in return for their efforts. Have someone pick up the completed survey. This will increase the probability of it being completed. You may wish to follow up with a telephone reminder either just before, or just after, the deadline date. It is important that you get as may responses as possible.

2d) What to do With Responses

The same basic principles which were identified for recording consumer survey responses can be applied to the business survey. Because of the relatively large number of questions requesting opinions, however, where applicable, the planner, economist or other professional responsible for evaluating the results should undertake the task of tabulating or recording responses. If your resources are limited, professional involvement could be restricted to recording responses to those questions requiring a verbal reply or an opinion. Recording of the remaining responses is a relatively simple procedure.

3. Circulation Study

A problem which is perceived in many downtowns as being a contributor to a depressed state is one of poor traffic conditions and inadequate parking. Your business survey will tell you if the business people feel this problem exists in your downtown. If so, and depending upon how strongly they feel and your resource capabilities, you may consider undertaking a circulation study.

The primary purpose of a circulation study is to examine traffic flow and the parking situation. The study should:

- Determine major routes into the downtown and what type of traffic these routes carry.
- Determine if downtown is an easy place to get to and to get around in and, if not, why not.
- Identify directional traffic flows i.e., the circulation and pedestrian patterns.
- Identify bottlenecks and hazards.
- Identify conflicts between pedestrian and vehicular traffic and why are they conflicting at any particular location.
- Determine what is the traffic function of mainstreet.
- Determine if trucks are a problem and if they interfere with traffic flows and pedestrians.
- Determine the use of alleys, particularly in loading and unloading.
- Assess the parking situation - is it a real problem - and if so, conduct a parking survey.

The circulation study should be done by a qualified professional. A detailed methodology for conducting a downtown circulation study is described in Emanuel Berk's "Downtown Improvement Manual".*

Alberta Transportation provides another source of information pertaining to circulation studies and traffic improvements and have undertaken numerous transportation studies for smaller Alberta communities which include an evaluation of the downtown circulation system. Specific examples include the Town of High River, Town of Grimshaw and Town of Vermilion Transportation Studies. Each of these studies encompasses a specific section on downtown traffic flows and parking.

Drawing Conclusions on Your Information

The inventory process provides the base data and information which identifies what makes up downtown. The business survey not only augments the inventory, but adds meaning to the inventory data and provides the businessmens' perception of the problems and issues of downtown, the roles various organizations and levels of government should play in solving downtown's problems, and potential solutions. Now you are ready to answer the questions which will enable you to understand your downtown and draw meaningful conclusions - conclusions which identify what you have to work with, what barriers must be overcome and what issues must be addressed by your viable solution. Refer back to the beginning of this chapter for ideas on what questions to ask. The evaluation of downtown will be one of your most complex and important tasks. Remember that the success of a potential solution hinges on your understanding of your problems and opportunities.

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* Berk, Emanuel., "Downtown Improvement Manual", Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, 1981.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

The conclusions arising from each of the three processes comprising your comprehensive evaluation must now be considered in concert with one another. You must "put it all together". By so doing, you will be able to identify subtle interrelationships and causes and effects. An awareness and thorough understanding of the dynamics and impacts behind:

- what your consumer demands;
- what your competition offers;
- what your downtown does and does not offer; and,
- what assets and liabilities you have to work with,

will also result.

You should now know where:

- emphasis is needed;
- what financial resources you have to work with within your downtown;
- where these resources should be directed;
- what direction your downtown should take;
- if you are getting your share of consumer spending; and,
- if that share can be increased.

The major conclusions arising from your evaluation should be listed and described in a comprehensive working report that can be discussed at length by your Committee. These conclusions should be listed according to the major components of a downtown program, although it is recognized that overlap will occur. An overall general description of the downtown, the consumer market, and the competition should be included to put the conclusions in proper context and add meaning and depth. In other words, the report prepared should provide a summary of the facts and information obtained as well as the conclusions of the three pronged analysis. Copies of the report should be distributed to the subcommittees for their consideration and review to ensure that they have perceived the problems and situation in the same light and are in agreement. After all, they have already approached the problem through short term action planning. The report and conclusions serve as a check to ensure they are headed in the right direction. The benefit of your knowledge should be shared with those directly involved in working with the problem.

Once you are familiar with the major findings and conclusions of your analysis, the Committee or Board, assisted by resource persons, subcommittees and anyone else the Committee feels must be involved, should undertake three steps:

1. **Jointly complete a list of the assets and liabilities of your downtown** to stimulate discussion, ensure the report findings are understood, and that everyone agrees. This will help clarify the information and conclusions in the report and will allow you to focus on the basis for a viable solution.

2. **Prioritize your conclusions** to determine which are most important, which issues require immediate attention, which should be emphasized in a solution, what are your strongest assets , what are your greatest weaknesses, and where your financial resources should be concentrated.

3. **Review your original goals** and evaluate these in light of your prioritized conclusions. Determine if they still are realistic or applicable, if new goals should be added, if some should be deleted, and if the emphasis is in the right place.

Once these three steps have been taken, you have the basis for putting together a solution which will encompass both economic revitalization approaches and a physical improvement concept. Keep in mind that this comprehensive strategy for downtown revitalization will require the cooperation of your municipal council. This may be an appropriate point, therefore, to make a presentation to council which states:

- The status of your work.
- What you have accomplished.
- What the major findings and conclusions of your analysis are.
- How you now view the problem of downtown.
- Your revamped goals and objectives as well as your priorities.
- Your financial resource possibilities.
- Where you go from here.
- What kind of assistance will likely be required from council.

You may also wish to hold a public meeting at this point inviting all concerned agencies and organizations, particularly downtown merchants, as well as the general public, and make a presentation similar to the council presentation. Keep the public involved by providing information. You will need their support and assistance in implementing a viable solution.

APPENDIX

SAMPLE HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

Stony Plain Downtown Core Study Opinion Survey

1. How many miles do you live from downtown?

   _____

2. What are the two things you like most about the downtown core area of Stony Plain?

   _____

   _____

3. What are the two things you like least about downtown?

4. A list has been put together of possible ways to make the downtown more attractive and enjoyable. Beside each item, please mark whether you agree with the suggestions, are neutral or disagree.

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Provide weather protection (awnings) canopies, etc.)	( )	( )	( )
Provide wider sidewalks	( )	( )	( )
Keep down litter and dirt	( )	( )	( )
Provide recreation opportunities (e.g., movie theatre, bowling, etc.)	( )	( )	( )
Enhance building facades	( )	( )	( )
Encourage more downtown events	( )	( )	( )
Provide more specialty stores	( )	( )	( )
Increase the number of parking spaces	( )	( )	( )
Increase multi-unit housing in or near downtown	( )	( )	( )
Increase public park space in the downtown	( )	( )	( )
Encourage development of hotel and tourist facilities	( )	( )	( )

5. With regard to public street improvements, such as street trees, planters, benches and sidewalk paving, what is the maximum increase on your property taxes you would be willing to pay each year to help support these items?

_____ $10 or less _____ $20 _____ $30 _____ $40 or more

6. On the average, how many separate trips do you and members of your household make each month to each of the areas indicated below for shopping of any kind?

	No. of Trips each Month
Downtown Stony Plain	_____
Meridian Mall	_____
Spruce Grove	_____
Edmonton	_____

7. On your shopping trips, what are the principal types of purchases that you make outside of Stony Plain (i.e., in Spruce Grove or Edmonton)?

Hardware/Housewares	_____
Clothing/Shoes	_____
Food	_____
Home Furnishings/Accessories/Appliances	_____
Sports Equipment/Accessories	_____
Other - specify:	_____

8. Check the three most important changes to the downtown that would encourage you and members of your household to shop in the downtown area, rather than going elsewhere:

Lower prices	_____
Improved customer service	_____
More restaurants/coffee shops	_____
More park/relaxation areas	_____
Greater selection of merchandise	_____
More frequent sales of merchandise	_____
Stores open longer hours	_____
Improved parking	_____
Other (Please list)	_____

_____

9. How many people are there in your household?

Male adults (over 16)	_____
Female adults (over 16)	_____
Children (16 and under)	_____

10. Do you feel that the planned new Safeway shopping mall will be beneficial or detrimental to downtown business activity?

Significantly Detrimental	Somewhat Detrimental	Little or No Impact	Beneficial	No Opinion
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Thank you for your assistance in responding to these questions. Please return the questionnaire as soon as possible.

If you have any additional comments, please feel free to provide them below.

Sample Downtown Shopper's Survey

1. What Part of Town do you live in?

2. If from out of town, how many miles away do your live?

3. How many people are there in your household?
   - male adults (over 16) _____
   - female adults (over 16) _____
   - children (16 or under) _____

4. What is the purpose of your visit today?
   - Shopping _____
   - Business _____
   - Personal/Social Business _____
   - Pleasure/Entertainment _____

5. How often do you or members of your household shop downtown?
   - often, more than once a week _____
   - once a week _____
   - once every two weeks _____
   - once a month _____
   - hardly ever _____

6. Where else do you shop?
   - name local shopping centre _____
   - name other communities _____

7. What sorts of purchases do you make elsewhere? (identify where)
   - drugs/cosmetics _____
   - hardware/housewares _____
   - clothing/shoes _____
   - food _____
   - home furnishings/appliances _____
   - sports equipment _____
   - autos and accessories _____
   - other (specify) _____

8. How often do you or members of your household come downtown for entertainment/recreation and pleasure?
   - often, more than once a week _____
   - once a week _____
   - once every two weeks _____
   - once a month _____
   - hardly ever _____

9. What would make you shop downtown more often?

. lower prices	_____
. improved service	_____
. greater merchandise selection	_____
. more frequent sales	_____
. longer store hours	_____
. improved parking	_____

10. Which two are more important?

11. Do you think more entertainment, restaurant establishments are needed?

12. What sort?

. restaurants	_____
. theatres	_____
. hotels	_____
. lounges	_____
. parks	_____
. bowling alleys	_____
. others (specify)	_____

SAMPLE COMPETING MALL SHOPPER'S SURVEY

Sample Competing Mall Shopper's Survey

1. What part of town do you live in?

2. If from out of town, how many miles away do you live?

3. How many people are there in your household?
   - . male adults (over 16) _____
   - . female adults (over 16) _____
   - . children (16 or under) _____

4. How often do you shop here?
   - . often, more than once a week _____
   - . once a week _____
   - . once every two weeks _____
   - . once a month _____
   - . hardly ever _____

5. What proportion of your shopping is done here?
   - . most of it _____
   - . about one half _____
   - . less than one half _____

6. What do you mostly shop for here?
   - . food _____
   - . clothing _____
   - . sports equipment _____
   - . drugs/cosmetics _____
   - . hardware/housewares _____
   - . large purchases (furniture/appliances) _____
   - . auto accessories _____

7. How often do you shop downtown?
   - . often, more than once a week _____
   - . once a week _____
   - . once every two weeks _____
   - . once a month _____
   - . hardly ever _____

8. What proportion is done downtown?
   - . most of it _____
   - . about one half _____
   - . less than one half _____
   - . none _____

9. What do you mostly purchase downtown?

- food _____
- clothing _____
- sports equipment _____
- drugs/cosmetics _____
- hardware/housewares _____
- large purchases (furniture/appliances) _____
- auto accessories _____

10. Why do you shop here?

- lower prices _____
- better service _____
- greater merchandise selection _____
- more frequent sales _____
- more pleasant atmosphere _____
- better parking _____
- more stores _____
- more accessible _____

11. Which two are more important?

12. What would make you shop downtown more often?

- lower prices _____
- better service _____
- longer store hours _____
- greater merchandise selection _____
- more stores _____
- more sales _____
- more pleasant atmosphere _____
- more restaurants/cafes entertainment facilities _____
- more parks _____
- better parking _____

13. Which three are most important?

SAMPLE BUSINESS SURVEY

Questionnaire

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS CONCERN THE NATURE OF BUSINESSES IN THE CENTRAL AREA. THEY HAVE BEEN INCLUDED SO THAT THE ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE CAN BE CATEGORIZED ACCORDING TO VARIOUS CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS. FOR EXAMPLE, BY KNOWING THE TYPE OF BUSINESS OPERATED BY EACH RESPONDENT WE CAN DETERMINE WHETHER AS A GROUP, MERCHANTS WITH SIMILAR TYPES OF BUSINESSES HOLD SIMILAR OPINIONS AND DESIRE SIMILAR CENTRAL AREA CHANGES.

1. What is the name of your business?

   If the name of your business does not indicate the nature of your enterprise, please describe your business (e.g., A.B. Smith Ltd., -- chartered accountant).

   _____

   _____

2. What is the Gross Leasable Area of your business premises? (Gross Leasable Area is the building area on which rent is, or would be paid).

   _____ square feet.

   (a) Are your premises: (check one)

   Owned? ( )
   Rented? ( )

   (b) How many people do you employ?

	Number
Full-time staff	_____
Part-time staff	_____

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS CONCERN BUILDINGS IN THE CENTRAL AREA.

3. Overall, how would you rate the exterior appearance of buildings:

   (a) In the central area?

Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
( )	( )	( )	( )

   (b) On your street or avenue?

Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
( )	( )	( )	( )

4. Please rate the building or part of the building containing your business.

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Exterior Appearance	( )	( )	( )	( )
Interior Appearance	( )	( )	( )	( )
Amount of Space	( )	( )	( )	( )
Arrangement of Space	( )	( )	( )	( )

5. Would you rent additional space if it were available to you.

(a) At your present premises? Yes ( ) No ( )

(b) Elsewhere? Yes ( ) No ( )

6. How much rent would you be willing to pay?

_____ per square foot per year.

7. (a) Are there buildings in the central area which are of historical or architectural interest and should be retained?

Yes ( ) No ( )

(b) If Yes, please identify _____

_____

8. (a) Are there areas of the central area which you feel are run-down and in need of renewal (removal of existing buildings and construction of new buildings)?

Yes ( ) No ( )

(b) If Yes, which area(s)?

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

9. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Agree	Disagree
Business signs in the central area are too large.	( )	( )
Business signs in the central area are poorly maintained.	( )	( )
Business signs in the central area are poorly designed.	( )	( )
Business signs in the central area detract from the building architecture.	( )	( )
The appearance of signs is an important part of attracting customers to central area businesses.	( )	( )

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS CONCERN THE ROADWAY SYSTEM AND PARKING IN THE CENTRAL AREA.

10. How satisfied are you with the roadway system?

(a) To the central area?

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
( )	( )	( )	( )

(b) Within the central area?

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
( )	( )	( )	( )

11. What specific improvements are required to central area roadway system?

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

12. How many of your employees drive to work?

Number _____

13. (a) Do you know where most of your employees park?

Yes ( ) No ( )

(b) If yes, it is: (Check one)

On the street within 250 feet of your business? ( )

On the street further than 250 feet from your business? ( )

In your business private parking lot? ( )

In a parking lot within 250 feet of your business? ( )

In a parking lot further than 250 feet from your business? ( )

14. (a) Do you know where most of your customers park?

Yes ( ) No ( )

(b) If yes, is it: (Check one)

On the street within 250 feet of your business? ( )

On the street further than 250 feet from your business? ( )

In your business private parking lot? ( )

In a parking lot within 250 feet of your business? ( )

In a parking lot further than 250 feet from your business? ( )

15. How close to your premises must parking be located in order for your business to benefit? (Check one)

Within 100' ( )
Within 100' to 200' ( )
Within 200' to 300' ( )
Within 300' to 400' ( )
Within 400' to 500' ( )

16. Do you believe the addition of parking meters in your area would be of assistance?

    Yes ( ) No ( )

17. Are there an adequate number of parking stalls in the central area?

    Yes ( ) No ( )

18. Is the development of additional nearby off-street parking areas necessary in your area?

    Yes ( ) No ( )

19. What other parking improvements do you think are needed?

    (1) _____

    (2) _____

    (3) _____

20. (a) Would you be willing to pay for the parking improvements you have suggested if other businesses do likewise?

        Yes ( ) No ( )

    (b) If No, how should improvements be financed?

        _____

21. With respect to deliveries:

    (a) How many days of the week are deliveries made by truck to your business? (Check one)

        One day ( ) Four days ( ) Seven days ( )

        Two days ( ) Five days ( )

        Three days ( ) Six days ( )

    (b) On an average delivery day, how many trucks do you expect? (Check one)

        One ( ) Four ( )

        Two ( ) Five ( )

        Three ( ) Six or more ( )

22. Where do the delivery trucks park to load or unload? (Check one)

On the street	( )
In the alley	( )
At an on-site loading dock	( )
In an on-site loading dock	( )

23. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Agree	Disagree
Central area sidewalks are in poor condition.	( )	( )
Central area streetlighting is poor.	( )	( )
The central area is dirty and littered.	( )	( )
Overhead power and telephone lines should be removed.	( )	( )
More landscaping is necessary in the central area.	( )	( )
There is a lack of street furnishings (benches, litter baskets, outdoor telephones, etc.).	( )	( )
There should be more coordination of building designs at street level.	( )	( )
Continuous awnings or canopies are required for weather protection along central area streets.	( )	( )

24. (a) In your opinion:

Are additional public or private recreational opportunities required in the central area?

Yes ( ) No ( )

(b) If Yes, what types of recreation opportunities are required? (Please Specify)

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS CONCERN THE AVAILABILITY OF GOODS AND SERVICES, MERCHANDISING AND PROMOTION OF THE CENTRAL AREA.

25. Please rate the following for the central area.

	Good	Fair	Poor
Selection of goods	( )	( )	( )
Competitive pricing	( )	( )	( )
Length of store hours	( )	( )	( )
Quality of sales staff	( )	( )	( )
Advertising	( )	( )	( )
Special sales events	( )	( )	( )
Variety of places to eat	( )	( )	( )

26. (a) Should the Town offer special incentives to attract a major commercial use to the central area?

Yes ( ) No ( ) Don't Know ( )

(b) If Yes, what would be an effective incentive?

_____

_____

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS CONCERN THE FEASIBILITY OF REDEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE CENTRAL AREA

27. Where would you consider to be an appropriate location(s) for each of the following businesses:

	Downtown	Adjacent to Highway	Neighbourhood Commercial Centre
Retail Trade			
Food (i.e. Groceries)	( )	( )	( )
Restaurant	( )	( )	( )
Department Store	( )	( )	( )
Building Materials/Garden	( )	( )	( )
Auto Sales/Services	( )	( )	( )
Equipment Sales/Rental	( )	( )	( )
Clothing	( )	( )	( )
Sporting Goods	( )	( )	( )
Home Furnishings	( )	( )	( )
Jewelry	( )	( )	( )
Drugs	( )	( )	( )
Entertainment Facilities	( )	( )	( )
Service Trade			
Finance/Insurance	( )	( )	( )
Repair Service (i.e. Appliances)	( )	( )	( )
Personal Service (i.e. Beauty Salon)	( )	( )	( )
Professional Service (i.e. Doctor)	( )	( )	( )
Business Service (i.e. Travel Agent)	( )	( )	( )
General Office	( )	( )	( )
Hotel/Motel	( )	( )	( )
Warehousing Trade	( )	( )	( )
Light Industrial	( )	( )	( )

28. Would you consider relocating your business outside the central area if commercial space were available?

Yes ( ) No ( ) Don't Know ( )

29. Would you please describe the area (boundaries) which you feel should be considered for central area redevelopment?

_____

_____

30. In your opinion, in what ways would the redevelopment of the central area be to your benefit?

_____

_____

31. (a) Would your business be interested in assisting with the redevelopment of the central area?

Yes ( ) No ( )

(b) If Yes, what activities would you be willing to undertake?

	Yes	No
Renovate the interior of your premises?	( )	( )
Renovate the exterior of your premises?	( )	( )
Construct an entirely new business premise?	( )	( )
Relocate to a new building premise?	( )	( )
Improve the immediate surroundings of your premises?	( )	( )
Undertake some other types of improvements?	( )	( )

If Yes, please describe:

_____

_____

Support redevelopment financing	( )	( )
Volunteer advice	( )	( )
Volunteer manpower	( )	( )
Donate materials	( )	( )

32. (a) Should housing be encouraged within the central area?

Yes ( ) No ( )

(b) If Yes, what types of dwellings? (Check the appropriate types)

Single Family Detached	( )
Duplexes	( )
Row Housing	( )
Walk-up Apartments	( )
Highrise Apartments	( )
Combined Residential/ Commercial Complexes	( )

33. Would you be in favour of a redevelopment levy, to be applied to all new developments to pay for the public expenditures required by new development such as; improved roadways, expanded public utilities and additional open space?

Yes ( ) No ( ) Don't Know ( )

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS CONCERN THE EXISTING LAND USE REGULATIONS AFFECTING THE CENTRAL AREA.

34. (a) Are you aware of the provisions of the Town's land use bylaw as they affect the central area?

Yes ( ) No ( )

(b) If Yes, are the existing land use bylaw regulations:

Good ( ) Poor ( )

35. What types of changes should be made to the land use bylaw regulations? (Check one or more)

( ) Increased flexibility
( ) Greater certainty/less discretion
( ) Greater attention to building design
( ) Greater attention to landscaping
( ) Greater attention to signing
( ) Increased parking space requirements
( ) Decreased parking space requirements
( ) Increased development densities
( ) Provide for greater mixing of land uses
( ) Other (please specify)
(1) _____
(2) _____
(3) _____

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS CONCERN THE SUBJECT OF DEVELOPMENT BONUSES. A DEVELOPMENT BONUS OCCURS WHEN THE MUNICIPALITY GRANTS A DEVELOPER THE RIGHT TO BUILD AT HIGHER DENSITIES THAN NORMALLY PERMITTED IN EXCHANGE FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF SELECTED PUBLIC AMENITIES.

36. Should the Town provide for development bonuses within the central area?

Yes ( ) No ( ) Don't Know ( )

37. Check the types of improvements which you feel should qualify for development bonuses.

( ) Street level public open space
( ) Continuous weather protection in the form of sidewalk canopies
( ) Landscaping in addition to normal bylaw regulations
( ) Conformance to an overall central area design theme
( ) Parking provided in excess of bylaw requirements
( ) Residential development above street level commercial/office uses
( ) Other (Please specify)

(1) _____
(2) _____
(3) _____

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS CONCERN YOUR PRIORITIES FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE CENTRAL AREA.

38. In terms of redeveloping the central area of Stony Plain, would you please rank the Five Most Important areas that should be considered? (Put a '1' in the column of the first most important, '2' in the column of the second most important, and so on).

	Rank
General Appearance	( )
Appearance of Buildings	( )
Signs (Appearance)	( )
Street Furnishings/Landscaping	( )
Open Space	( )
Historical Preservation	( )
Traffic Circulation	( )
Parking	( )
Roadway Maintenance	( )
Land Use Bylaw	( )
Merchandising and Promotion of Central Area	( )
Other (Please Specify)	( )

_____
_____

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS CONCERN THE ACTIVITIES OF THE TOWN, THE STONY PLAIN CHAMBER OF COMMMERCE, THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE, AND THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT.

39. Has the Town of Stony Plain adequately supported the central area?

    Yes ( ) No ( )

40. What activities should the Town of Stony Plain undertake to support the central area?

    (1) _____
    (2) _____
    (3) _____

41. What activities should Stony Plain Chamber of Commerce undertake to support the central area?

    (1) _____
    (2) _____
    (3) _____

42. What activities should the Economic Development Committee undertake to support the central area?

    (1) _____
    (2) _____
    (3) _____

43. What activities should the Provincial Government and its agencies undertake to support central area development?

    (1) _____
    (2) _____
    (3) _____

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS (Please print)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

SECTION 3
VIABLE SOLUTIONS

This section contains:

135 INTRODUCTION

141 ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION TECHNIQUES
- Promotion
- Marketing
- Business Recruitment

185 PHYSICAL REVITALIZATION TECHNIQUES
- Existing Buildings
- Infill Development
- Signs
- Public Improvements and Beautification
- Conclusion

211 EVALUATION

217 FOOTNOTES

223 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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INTRODUCTION

Downtown is a very special part of a community. It is its core, its heart, its lifeblood. Every downtown is different, has a reason for being, and has developed in a certain manner. Development has occurred incrementally, over many years, and is testimony to a community's past history and its roots. It is this incremental development that makes downtown unique and interesting. The variety and character of its physical and functional elements can never be duplicated or replaced. Unlike shopping centres, which are often stereotypical blueprints of one another, there is no blueprint for downtown.

The uniqueness and special identity that characterizes downtown precludes the development of a standardized, set approach to downtown revitalization. Every local situation requires a solution which addresses, and is applicable to, that situation. Just as there are some features common to most downtowns, however, there are common elements to be found in various revitalization approaches that have been applied in small communities across North America. By examining the approaches that have proven to be effective, certain commonalities can be identified. These commonalities can then be applied and modified in developing a viable solution for revitalizing your particular downtown.

The majority of the approaches that have been taken for revitalizing downtown in the past five to ten years have concentrated on its physical aspects. The reasons are twofold. First, provincial governments, recognizing that downtowns were floundering, provided funding through grants for downtown public improvement programs. The provision of such grants had a certain appeal in that visual evidence of a government's concern was quickly attained. Also, the grant programs could be easily administered through local governments and the entire community benefited. Second, there was a belief, or possibly a hope, that if the physical appearance of downtown was improved, its economic woes would be eradicated.

In other words, economic woes and floundering businesses were believed to be a result of the physical deterioration of downtown. The fallacy of this contention has become all too obvious since physical improvements have been found to provide little relief to downtown's economic problems. In many cases, recently installed public improvements have themselves started to deteriorate.

What has become clearly evident is that the physical deterioration of downtown is most often the result of its economic ailments. If downtown businesses were prospering, physical improvements would become affordable and feasible. This is not to say that the physical aspects are not important. If downtown looks dirty, tired and uncared for, there is little hope for attracting customers and new businesses. Image is all important in today's market place. Just as the physical aspects must be considered, however, so must the economic. The viability and prosperity of the merchants and businesses which are the soul of downtown must be addressed. What is required is a comprehensive approach - an approach that recognizes and understands the interrelationships between the physical and economic aspects of downtown.

In Canada, among the more successful examples of the comprehensive approach to downtown revitalization have been those sponsored and undertaken by the Heritage Canada Foundation. The Heritage Canada Foundation is a national charitable organization which was launched in 1973 to promote the protection of Canada's man-made and natural heritage.

Heritage Canada's Main Street Programme has been applied to seven "demonstration projects" or communities across Canada and is largely based upon an approach developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the U.S. Heritage Canada and the National Trust have developed their respective comprehensive approaches through actual field experience and "trial and error". Both organizations were initially interested in restoring and preserving the rich architectural history to be found along the main street of most small towns. Both organizations quickly found, however, that caring for, and attempting to preserve, the appearance of main street and the remainder of downtown was futile unless its economic livelihood was also restored. As John J. Stewart, Director of the Heritage Canada Main Street Programme points out, the appearance of downtown, and its very life, are fully dependent on each other. "Concern for its appearance is more than a cosmetic question - it means caring for the revitalization of shopping and social patterns as well as buildings."[1] This concern is particularly relevant in the face of the stiff competition coming from today's modern convenient shopping centres. "Physical changes alone cannot compete fully with the coordinated retailing of the shopping centres", says Mr. Stewart. "Economic initiatives, ranging from co-operation in merchandising to better display techniques, are essential to improve the business end of business. Economic problems must be faced squarely on their own terms."[2]

Pierre Berton, Canadian historian and author, and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Heritage Canada Foundation, expounds upon what Mr. Stewart says in a straight forward and succinct manner:

> "It is no use preserving a building unless a use can be found for it. It is no use preserving a streetscape unless it is economically viable." To save downtowns, "the foundation has realized it must help to make them pay ... it is the only way that works."[3]

Recognizing the need to address both the physical and economic side of things, the goal of Heritage Canada's Main Street Programme is a dual one aimed at combining architectural restoration and preservation techniques with economic and social revitalization of a community's commercial centre, through a process of incremental change. This same goal is shared by the U.S. National Trust for Historic Preservation. Although some of the success achieved in the Heritage Canada and the National Trust projects results from the provision and sponsorship of an onsite project coordinator, it is the dual approach which is the greatest contributor to successful projects. The approach need not be administered by a coordinator. A dedicated Downtown Revitalization Committee can work just as well. Regardless of who administers the approach, however, total community commitment and support is required. This commitment was found, in all the successful projects examined, to be as essential as the need to approach revitalization comprehensively.

HERITAGE CANADA PROJECTS ...

The seven communities which have served as "demonstration projects" for the Heritage Canada Main Street Programme include:

Perth, Ontario (population - 6,000)
Nelson, B.C. (population - 10,000)
Bridgetown, Nova Scotia (population - 1,000)
Windsor, Nova Scotia (population - 3,600)
Cambridge, Ontario (population - 77,000)
Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan (population - 34,000)
Fort Macleod, Alberta (population - 3,200)

These "projects" provide particularly useful examples for identifying and evaluating the "commonalities" of both physical and economic revitalization techniques because: they are all Canadian communities and, therefore, share similar national characteristics; the work undertaken has been reasonably well documented and is readily available; and, they have all achieved some measure of success.

Other processes or initiatives which have been examined in addition to the Heritage Canada and National Trust projects include the Business Improvement Area (BIA) legislation in Ontario and Alberta's Business Revitalization Zone (BRZ). Both of these, however, are tools or mechanisms for implementing a strategy for downtown revitalization. They do not in themselves, provide an approach. The BRZ legislation allows for the collection of funds within a designated area through a special business levy (See Technical Resource 2).

The BRZ has only recently been applied in some of Alberta's larger communities including Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer and Grande Prairie. It is still too early to determine whether or not the BRZ serves as an adequate mechanism for obtaining and administering funds directed towards downtown revitalization. Assuming that the BRZ can be successfully applied to a comprehensive type of approach, however, the potential for success is great. Such has been the case in Perth, Ontario, where the BIA form of funding has been melded with the Heritage Canada comprehensive approach. The two elements - one an approach, the other a tool, worked extremely well together. This comprehensive approach combined with the BRZ tool can work equally well in Alberta.

The commonalities of the comprehensive approach are the subject of the remainder of this Section. The commonalities are broken down into economic revitalization and physical revitalization techniques and examples are provided. To reiterate, two things must be kept in mind when developing a viable solution for your particular downtown. First, all the various economic and physical revitalization approaches must be considered in developing a comprehensive strategy. And second, just as downtown developed incrementally over time, so must a revitalization program. Nothing happens overnight.

ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION TECHNIQUES

There are three components to an economic revitalization strategy:

- Promotion.
- Marketing.
- Business Recruitment.

They are all strongly interrelated and interdependent. Individual businesses may have already addressed these components. What is needed, however, is a collective approach - an approach that promotes and markets downtown as a whole. The key to this collective approach is cooperation. There is strength in numbers.

•PROMOTION

•MARKETING

•RECRUITMENT

Promotion

The promotion of downtown is one of the most effective means available of achieving economic revitalization. It is important to sell downtown to the community and the surrounding trade area as a good place to shop, do business, be entertained - a place to enjoy. Promotion can help create a new image for downtown by changing existing impressions. It can be promoted as a vibrant gathering place where "things happen".

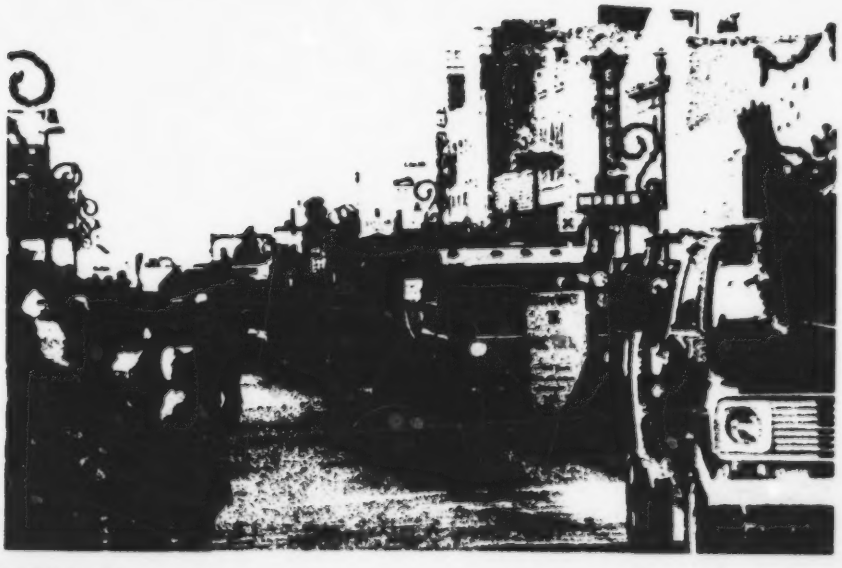
Promotion is a key factor used by shopping centre developments for attracting people. Downtown, however, and main street in particular, provides a far more suitable and attractive ambience than do shopping centres for many types of events. Parades, barbeques, street dances, bicycle races, sidewalk sales, kiosks for artists, outdoor concerts, can all be successfully staged downtown and are considerably more appealing if held on main street, for example, than in a shopping centre parking lot. More importantly, downtown belongs to everyone - shopping centres do not. Promotion of downtown, by staging interesting historical and community oriented events which highlight the special appeal and unique character of downtown, convey a special message from downtown merchants to citizens and customers. Promotional activities that are interesting and people oriented tell customers that the merchants "appreciate their business, want them to come downtown and have fun, want them to enjoy downtown and main street". They "don't just want their money".[4]

SOME EXAMPLES ...

The types of promotional activities which can be successfully staged downtown are endless. Combine enthusiasm and imagination with careful planning and the right ingredients, and you are bound to "have a winner". Examples of the types of promotional events that have been organized by Heritage Canada coordinators in communities across the country provide interesting ideas for getting people downtown and can be staged in any community.

- In Bridgetown, Nova Scotia, a Fireman's Appreciation Day was staged which proved successful in spite of the two well attended weddings held the same day.
- In Windsor, Nova Scotia, a businessmen's Walk-a-thon raised $1,500 for mainstreet Christmas decorations in spite of the cold weather.

HERITAGE CANADA



HERITAGE CANADA

- In Fort Macleod, Alberta, the Town's first ever Santa Claus parade received an enthusiastic local response and received media coverage in Lethbridge and Calgary.
- In Nelson, B.C., a local cycling club was convinced to start and finish its 28 mile road race on downtown's mainstreet. The hundreds of spectators provided excellent exposure for both the club and downtown.

All of these events brought people together, encouraged community support, and promoted downtown. All gave a sense of life and activity, and worked better downtown than anywhere else.

TYPES OF PROMOTIONS

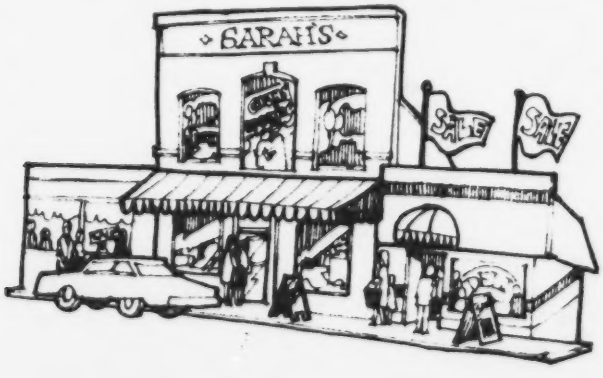
There are three types of promotions according to Heritage Canada and the U.S. National Trust for Historic Preservation. The three types of promotions include:

- retail sales,
- special events,
- general promotional programs,

and are described as follows:

1. Retail Sales

Retail sales are specifically geared towards attracting the consumer and the selling of merchandise. They can include sidewalk sales, $1.49 days, or may be geared towards occasions such as Christmas, back to school time, or Mother's Day. Extra interest can be generated in these sales by turning them into mini special events involving fun activities such as a Valentine-card contest or organizing a Halloween haunted house.



Some general pointers which can increase the effectiveness of retail sales include:

- Avoiding clearance "bargain basement" themes which convey a cheap image.
- Promoting "value" of sales merchandise, not its cheapness.
- Adding something unexpected to make the sale memorable.
- Recognizing that the actual sale of an item depends on the merchant, whereas "gimmicks" only attract customers, but do not convince them to buy.

Perhaps the most important factor to consider in the use of retail sales for promotion is to get as many merchants participating as possible. Special sales events in shopping malls are very successful because all outlets participate. The same principle should be applied to downtown to promote it as a unified one-stop sales centre.

2. Special Events

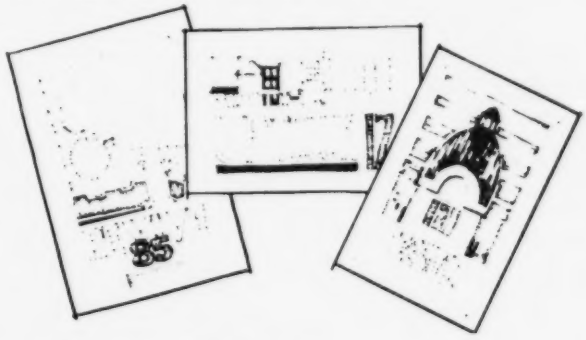
Special events can be orchestrated in concert with traditional holidays such as Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving Day or local historic themes. Most communities have traditional events that depict local heritage and can be integrated into a downtown promotional project. Examples include Perth, Ontario's Festival of the Maple, Windsor, Nova Scotia's Sam Slick Days, Moose Jaw's annual spring day-long band parade and, closer to home, Fort Macleod's Powwow, an event which created a great deal of enthusiasm and fervour.

HERITAGE CANADA

Ethnic festivals, such as Italian days, also create an opportunity for holding a special event downtown. Such festivals may be particularly suited to the Alberta scene with its rich store of cultural and ethnic diversities. The Farmers Market is another Alberta promotional activity which not only brings in out-of-town residents and supports local industry, but can best be staged downtown. Assistance and information can be obtained from Alberta Agriculture (See Technical Resource 3). Performances, musical extravaganzas, athletic functions, all provide opportunities for special downtown promotional events.

3. General Promotional Programs

General promotional programs are intended to project downtown as an unique area with a distinct identity - an interesting place to shop and visit. Image is the important "catch word". Tools for general promotional campaigns which identify downtown as a single entity, include slogans and logos, printed shopping bags, T-shirts, balloons, bumper stickers, an awards system for best store windows, a downtown directory and an events calendar. To be successful, general promotion must be an ongoing, year-round effort.



PLANNING A PROMOTIONAL PROGRAM

NOTE ...

Guidelines for planning a promotional activities program have been prepared by the National Trust and Heritage Canada and are based upon the actual experience of coordinators like Jim Mountain in Fort Macleod. Mr. Mountain recognizes the desirability of forming a subcommittee to prepare a promotional events schedule for a one-year time frame, lay out a plan of action, and delegate tasks. The subcommittee should decide upon the number of events to be sponsored for the year, and design the schedule to accommodate activities that fall into the three categories of promotions. Brainstorming sessions are suggested as being useful in preparing a list of ideas that could be used in each category. "The list should then be refined, facilities booked well in advance and, wherever possible, conflicts with other community activities should be avoided."[5]

1. Inventory Your Resources

- Prepare a list of relevant contacts from all the groups and organizations in your community which sponsor or could assist in sponsoring events. In particular, groups representing downtown merchants such as the Chamber of Commerce or Board of Trade should be contacted since the involvement, advice, participation, and support of downtown merchants and businessmen will be required.

- Compile a volunteer registry which includes community groups as well as key, capable individuals. Volunteers are particularly important for hosting special events which tend to be labour intensive.

- Investigate possible sources of federal and provincial funding. For example, grants provided by the federal Secretary of State for Canada Day festivals and provincial Alberta Heritage Days for ethnic events have proven to be valuable sources of funding. The Western Canadian Lottery Foundation is yet another potential funding source (See Technical Resource 3 for funding assistance and program opportunities).

- Identify potential activity sites. Examples of potential sites include:
  - main street,
  - an outdoor bandstand,
  - a theatre,
  - a senior's centre,
  - a museum,
  - walkways,
  - vacant lots,
  - town office or courthouse properties,
  - vacant buildings (can be rented for a special use such as "Santa's Headquarters").

  Most of these examples can be found in every Alberta downtown and each provides an opportunity for accommodating some form of promotional activity . It is important to remember that if suitable sites for particular activities are not available within downtown, that they be held as close to downtown as possible so that businesses can benefit from the spin-off effects and downtown's image is favourably impacted.

2. Do Your Homework

Consider all the logistics of hosting an event including:
- security,
- trash disposal and collection,
- parking,
- traffic,
- utility requirements such as water and electricity,
- sanitation,
- first aid.

Use this list as a "logistics checklist" in planning each event:

- Identify, contact and obtain the support of key town staff members that can assist you with the logistics such as street and traffic workers, the town engineer, and the town manager.
- Identify the procedures and bylaws which affect permit approvals recognizing that most outdoor events require municipal approval.
- Check with the local health inspector about rules governing food sales and display.
- Discuss with the fire and police departments plans for site delineation, parking, traffic and crowd control.

3. Ensure Adequate Publicity

- Special events should be publicized at least three weeks prior to the event.
- Involve and use the local media. The media is perhaps the most effective means of publicity available and can stimulate enthusiasm and "word of mouth" advertising.
- Other techniques that can be used to publicize include posters, banners and buttons.

4. Ingredients For Success

- The U.S. National Trust for Historic Preservation has identified five ingredients that are particularly useful for ensuring success. Experience in Canadian downtowns has proven their value. The five ingredients are:

- music,
- food and drink,
- overlapping events,
- children,
- giveaway items.

All five conjure up images of fun and activity.

5. Tips For Success

- Start small and emphasize quality over quantity.
- Seek community participation. Politicians and community leaders should be kept informed about, and involved in, community events such as store openings, festivals, parades and commemorative ceremonies. All these events promote the community as well as downtown. Local provincial and federal representatives can also be invited to certain events to generate interest and publicity.
- Try to stage events on a regular monthly, seasonal or annual basis to promote an image of continuity and stability. Make these events something the community can anticipate and look forward to.
- Review and evaluate past events and stay with the proven ones. Experience has shown that it is also best to allow sponsorship to remain with the organizations which have traditionally organized each event but that assistance can be provided and co-sponsorship encouraged.
- Remember that downtown is the best location for community groups to stage events to get maximum exposure. Use this requirement for exposure to your advantage.
- Add something new to retail sales to make them special and, if an idea works and you use it again, build in something new.
- **Give ample credit, thanks and praise.** The importance of this can not be overly emphasized.

SOME EXAMPLES ...

Examples of successful promotional activities which illustrate the use of various resources available from all levels of government are described in "Promoting and Marketing Downtown", by Jim Mountain. These examples pertain to Windsor, Nova Scotia and Fort MacLeod, Alberta and the relevant excerpts have been extracted and reproduced herein.

> "Both the federal and provincial governments can provide useful assistance for special events. At the federal level, the Secretary of State's office provides Canada Day grants to assist local festivals. Provincial holidays also sometimes have grant programs. Alberta's Heritage Day grant helped sponsor a powwow and Old West festival in Fort Macleod on the long weekend of August 1983. This event revived a long-standing activity and attracted some twelve hundred people, locals and tourists, most of whom had not seen the like before. For an event such as this, which could capitalize on Fort Macleod's proximity to the Blood reserve, Indian dancers and five drum groups travelled considerable distance to attend. It is a long-standing tradition that such revered dancers and drummers are paid to perform and so a significant portion of the two thousand dollar grant helped to support their presence at the powwow. Portions of the funds were also used to provide a puppet show, materials for face-painting, to subsidize a barbeque beef-on-a-bun picnic for 250 people, to stage an outdoor band concert, and to rent a sound system for the day. Nearly every community in Canada is familiar with such traditional activities from its past. These can be used by the downtown community to promote itself, either as a once-a-year activity or as a continuing series of events.

Branches of federal and provincial governments responsible for employment can also be useful sources of funds. Employment and Immigration Canada, through its Canada Employment centres, administers a number of employment programs which can provide staff for projects related to downtown revitalization. These programs tend to vary by the year or the season and in recent years have appeared under names such as NEED, Canada Works, or LEAD. These may be sponsored by municipalities or in some cases, by non-profit organizations. The local Canada Employment centre should be contacted for information regarding government-funded job opportunities. Even if this is for clean-up work for example, on a site that is in the vicinity of downtown but deemed unsuitable or unsavory - such a project could become an asset to the community and to related promotions. A good example from the Heritage Canada project towns is found in Windsor, Nova Scotia, where a park and wharf were provided for Pisiquid Lake. This body of water, formed when a new highway cut across to Falmouth and for many years hardly used, became a place enjoyed by recreational sailors, canoeists, and swimmers. The park adjacent to the wharf was sodded, a bandstand erected, and trees planted. Entry to the park is by a new parking lot, which also serves the business community along Water Street. Since Water Street used to be the centre of the nineteenth-century port town, this construction reinforces other heritage initiatives that had begun on various town buildings.

It has been estimated that the federal grants which helped to develop this park amounted to $71,000 and employed nine men over seven months. That activity in turn has generated a recent $500,000 grant from the province of Nova Scotia for the redevelopment of Windsor's waterfront.

The money will be spent on three related activities: the improvement of the active recreation area; creation of a land mass for private-sector commercial development; and a passive recreation corridor, for sitting and watching. A bike path is also planned. Windsor's attractiveness as a multiple destination - for shopping, business, and recreation will be enhanced by what began as a make-work project. Provincial government departments responsible for job creation also sponsor a variety of similar programs. Alberta's Student Temporary Employment Program enabled nine students to be hired for a summer theatre project in 1983 and provided a tourist oriented use for the old Empress Theatre in Fort Macleod. Alberta Agriculture is encouraging local farmer's markets, and in 1983 there were one hundred across the province receiving its support. For that to happen a community has to organize two markets by itself. Fort Macleod's attracted only three sellers at first; later, the number climbed to eight. These included farmers from neighbouring Hutterite colonies, Japanese Canadian market gardeners from two hundred kilometres away, a person who had come all the way from the West Coast to sell fish, a honey stall, and a local artist selling various handicrafted items. Downtown merchants took advantage of this event to put their own tables in front of their stores."[6]

BUDGETING

Budgeting for promotions is a difficult exercise, particularly in the case of first-run events. It is, nevertheless, crucial that a budget be prepared, and necessary funds obtained. Even with substantial volunteer assistance and donations, the cost of a running promotional schedule must be considered first, to determine how much additional funding will be required and, second, to explain to donors how funds will be spent. Examples of budget items which should be considered include:

- Advertising through the media, handbills, posters, flyers, postage, balloons, buttons, decals, bumper stickers.
- Sound and lighting equipment.
- Facility rental.
- Food purchases for volunteers.
- Transportation.
- Clean-up.
- Special gimmicks.
- Entertainers fees.

NOTE ...

Based upon practical experience in Fort Macleod, Heritage Canada coordinators offer the following advise with respect to budgeting:

- **Be sure to include donated goods, services and labour on your budget sheet. A meeting room, for example, has a rental equivalent, even if it has been donated for your use. Donated materials and labour show that the community is contributing something. This is an important consideration for obtaining grants since many agencies will match or contribute most of the cost of an event if it can be demonstrated that community donations are being realized.**

- **Funds may be raised through voluntary business donations (may be in the form of goods or services), special events grants from various levels of government, special levies (such as the BRZ approach), and from service organizations.**

Cost sharing seems to work best in small communities and may be more successful if a greater number of businesses and clubs are approached for less, than if a few are approached for more. This approach may be time consuming but involves more people as participants and evokes community pride as well as pride in downtown. The 1984 promotional budget in Fort Macleod was $7000.

TOURISM

Tourism may be an important, albeit somewhat independent, component of promotion and can contribute substantially to the viability of downtown and the community as a whole. Specific benefits of tourism include:

- Job creation.
- Additional economic base for stores, restaurants, hotels, motels, gas stations and other related businesses.
- Sells downtown to visitors who otherwise may not stop and spend money.
- Promotes qualities unique to the community, making these evident to local residents.
- Supports local arts and cultural activities.
- Generates community pride.

In spite of these benefits, however, numerous disadvantages can be identified such as:

- The seasonal influx of tourist taxing the infrastructure.
- Seasonal employment only.
- The tax burden to residents who pay for tourist amenities.
- Congestion, pollution and development overkill.

Experience has shown that, all too often, tourism serves as a false economy and can entrap a community. Nevertheless, if properly planned, tourism generally can offer more advantages than disadvantages to small towns.

For most small towns, tourism is an elusive trade. A successful strategy requires the input of municipal council, retail merchants, community leaders and the local food, service and accommodation sectors. More importantly, it requires an attraction. The most successful attractions are those that deal with true heritage - museums, historic sites, monuments, architecturally interesting buildings. Other local resources which may serve as tourist attractions include:

- Cultural assets such as fairs, festivals, exhibitions and ethnic traditions.
- Environmental resources.
- Recreational and sporting activities.

Two factors are important to remember when pursuing the tourist dollar. First, tourists are not interested in cheap "claptrap" or "gimmicky" themes. They are after quality. And second, once the tourist is attracted, the community must be able to meet his needs thereby capitalizing on his spending capability. "If there are no interesting restaurants, or shops that sell books or pamphlets on the local area and its history, or nice places to spend the night, then the tourist will not stay long, nor will he spread his recommendations to friends".[7]

The development of a community tourist strategy will require a separate and distinct organization and should not be considered under the guise of downtown revitalization. The downtown business sector, however, stands much to gain if tourism can be successfully promoted and, through the downtown revitalization committee, can help instigate and support the tourist trade.

The manner in which tourism is approached will vary substantially for every community. Seven points have been identified by marketing experts, however, which can serve as a simple universal procedure to follow.[8]

1. Get Community Leaders Involved

An organization is required to promote tourist activity. This organization must include both elected and non-elected community leaders to demonstrate to the community, that if high-profile people care about it, tourism is an important activity.

2. Start A Community Education Program

Assuming the leaders are in place, the community needs to be educated on the benefits of tourism. Answers to the question, "what's in it for me?" must be provided. The media can assist in this educational process.

3. Assess Potential

Be optimistic, but realistic. Highway routes, weather, proximity to major centres and other tourist attractions, and aesthetic and interesting physical features must be considered.

4. Develop A Plan

The major ingredients of a plan should be:

- How many tourists can be attracted?
- What are we going to tell them?
- How are we going to tell them?
- How much do we invest to attract the tourists?

Alberta Tourism and Small Business can assist you in developing such a plan.

5. Execute the Plan

Tourists will not be attracted by just planning and wishful thinking. Once a plan is developed, the work must commence.

6. Evaluate and Manage

A plan has to be evaluated and checked to make sure progress is being made. If changes are required, then these changes should be made as conscious decisions, not as accidents or ad hoc.

7. Enjoy

Tourism, if properly planned for and handled, can bring as much enjoyment to the hosts, as to the visitors.

AN EXAMPLE ...

Word of mouth is perhaps tourism's most successful form of advertising. In Fort Macleod, which boasts an original 1874 North West Mounted Police force, fewer than five percent of the fifty thousand annual visitors stopped on mainstreet, located less than one block away. Most visitors simply passed through town. With the assistance of the Heritage Canada coordinator, features such as a theatre project offering old-fashioned melodrama and a student worker providing walking tour guides, resulted in a doubling of the number of tourists being attracted to mainstreet.

The Fort Macleod experience exemplifies the importance of historical and cultural opportunities to lure the tourists into downtown as well as the extensive time period which may be required for a tourist strategy to succeed.

CONCLUSION

The promotion of downtown can be an important contributor to improved business. If you can get more local residents to spend a greater proportion of their leisure and shopping time in downtown, a corresponding increase in consumer spending will result. In Bridgetown, Nova Scotia, downtown merchants attributed an 18 to 61 percent increase in gross sales in one year to promotional activities. This dramatic increase provides strong evidence of the importance of promotion for generating additional business.

Marketing

More so than any other economic approach, sensitive and effective marketing can lead to increased business revenues and the revitalization of downtown's economy. Marketing must be considered at two levels. Firstly, individual merchants must re-evaluate present marketing practices and formulate new techniques in order to successfully compete with the chain stores commonly found in shopping centres - techniques that recognize the requirements of today's consumer. Secondly, the individual efforts of merchants must be coordinated, where appropriate, to form a collective strategy which markets downtown as a single cohesive unit, thus emulating one of the most successful techniques employed by shopping centres for attracting consumers and generating revenue.

INDIVIDUAL MARKETING TECHNIQUES

The re-evaluation of present marketing practices and the changing, updating and improving of these practices, is a difficult task for most individual downtown merchants to undertake. Attitudes which reflect the "it has always been done this way" mode of thinking are all to prevalent among downtown merchants. Too often, merchants are complacent and make little effort to compete. Until recently, when there was enough business to go around, little effort was required. The problem is compounded by the strongly independent nature of the small businessman who may be adverse to accepting new ideas and advice. Yet, with the advent of today's convenient shopping centre form of retailing, modern chain stores, and increased awareness of what is available on the part of the consumer as a result of television and other national media venues, new marketing techniques must be considered by the small Alberta downtown merchant which will enable him not only to increase retail sales and better compete but, in some cases, to survive.

In considering marketing techniques, however, it is important to remember one of downtown's greatest attributes which stems from the strongly independent and individualistic nature of downtown merchants. Unlike retail outlets in shopping centres, downtown stores reflect the personality of the owner.

This is what makes downtown interesting, special and unique. It is well worth preserving. Nevertheless, a re-evaluation of marketing techniques may ensure that the nature of the independent operator does not spell his demise.

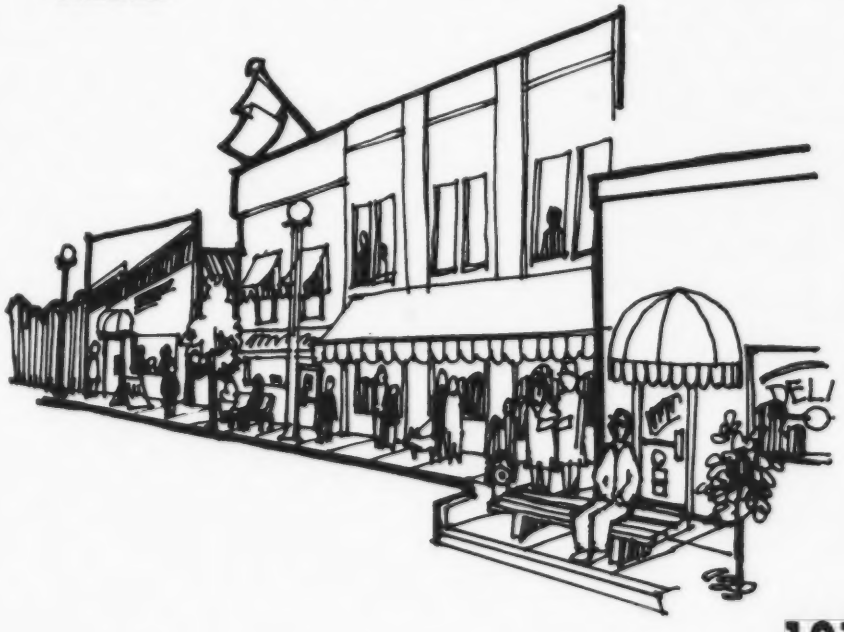
Much of the background information and knowledge which is required to evaluate marketing approaches and to identify necessary changes is available from your consumer, downtown business and competition surveys. Merchants themselves, however, must be prepared to take the initiative and investigate new product lines, new marketing techniques and new trends and fashions which pertain to their particular business.

The same principle applies to service people. The owner of a beauty salon, for example, may be required to learn new styling techniques or bring in trained personnel familiar with these techniques in order to compete with modern "in-vogue" salons.

Although each individual merchant must approach marketing in his own way to meet his specific requirements, six common elements which comprise the full spectrum of marketing should be considered.

1. The Customer

The merchant must consider who his customer is, what segment of the market he wants to attract, what that segment needs and demands.



2. Products

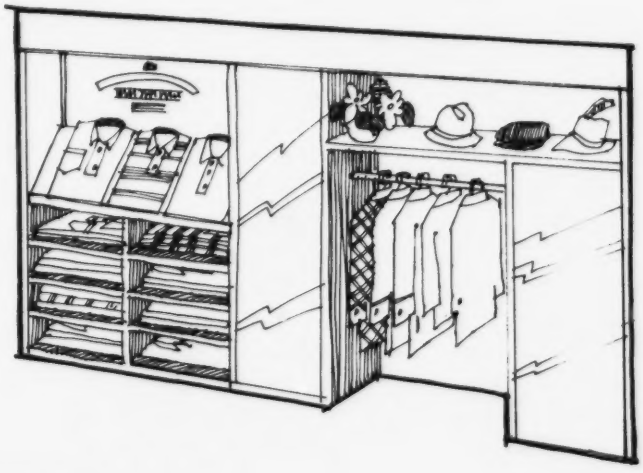
The merchant must tailor his product lines to meet the needs of the customers he wants to attract. Often the merchandise in downtown shops is outdated and the mix is inappropriate. New product lines should be considered to augment the existing inventory. New lines can help move older stock if the mix of merchandise is carefully considered. Although it is recognized that too great a variety may not be economically feasible and could present a danger to the merchant, too little variety or choice is equally dangerous.

3. Price Structure

A common complaint of consumers identified when investigating the market in U.S. and Canadian small towns is that the prices downtown are too high as compared to those found in shopping centres. Many merchants may deny this since pricing is an extremely sensitive issue. Nevertheless, the chain stores which occupy shopping centres are often able to undercut the small independent businessman. It is important that merchants compare their prices with those of the competition and, if necessary, re-evaluate their profit margin. Downtown merchants may have an advantage over merchants that lease space in shopping malls in that their retail outlets are often owner-occupied and rents are not included in overhead and operating expenses. This applies only in the absence of a mortgage. If prices can not be altered, downtown merchants should consider offering something extra, such as personalized service or quality merchandise that warrants higher prices.

4. Store Interiors

The interior appearance of a store and the manner in which merchandise is displayed can be extremely important in making a sale and getting the customer to come again. Lighting, colours, cleanliness, are all factors which can create a pleasant shopping environment within a shop. The manner in which merchandise is displayed is also important. Overcrowding and poor display tends to turn customers away since they can neither find what they are looking for nor see what is available. Store interiors and merchandising display is yet another standardized tool chain stores often use to their advantage.



5. Advertising

Merchant advertising is absolutely vital for increasing retail sales and building a reputation. Two methods are available to the independent merchant and both should be employed. Advertising through the local newspaper and broadcasting media can be very effective if the ads, graphics and wording are well thought out and capable of attracting the attention of the customer.

An even more effective method of advertising, however, is the "around-the-clock, 365 days a year"[9] opportunity available through window displays. Advertising through use of window displays, both collectively and at the individual level, is potentially one of downtown's most important marketing tools and is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

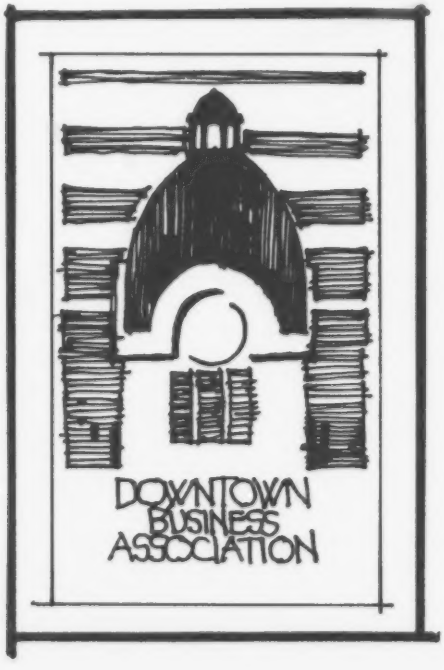
6. Service

Customer service is one aspect of marketing in which independent merchants can, and often do, outshine their competitors located in shopping malls. In fact, this may be one of downtown's greatest virtues. The downtown merchant can take advantage of one of the less desirable feature of today's modern chain stores, where "good service is a thing of the past". The old adage of "the customer is always right" should be recognized, within reason. Personal, friendly service, however, is not enough. It is incumbent upon each owner to ensure that his staff are both available on demand and knowledgeable about the products being sold.

Assistance on how to approach these marketing techniques is available from Alberta Tourism and Small Business and the Federal Business Development Bank. Technical Resource 3 identifies the actual training and programs available. The Downtown Revitalization Committee can play a vital role in encouraging downtown merchants to re-evaluate their marketing approach and consider new approaches by first, advising them through informal meetings or downtown business groups of the benefits which can accrue if better marketing practices are considered and, second, by investigating the government programs available, and arranging seminars and workshops.

COLLECTIVE MARKETING STRATEGY

By collectively marketing downtown, you are in effect promoting a desired image that will result in a positive repositioning of the consumers' thinking about downtown. The collective marketing approach is the most identifiable and successful feature of shopping malls. "When you go to a shopping mall, you know exactly what to expect, the kind of merchandise, the mix of stores, the standardization of hours."[10] This collective approach requires considerable organizational skills. Downtown is not a shopping mall, but a great deal can be learned from the mall's ability to organize a marketing strategy based upon the collective approach. The result of this approach is that consumers consider the mall a single entity and, although they shop in individual retail outlets located therein, psychologically, when they consider where they go shopping, they think of the mall first, and the outlet second. The same results can be achieved in downtown to the benefit of all the merchants and businessmen if some of the collective marketing techniques employed by shopping mall are emulated.



The marketing techniques are not many, complex or costly. They do, however, require cooperative organization. In shopping malls, the responsibility for organizing collective marketing is assumed by the mall manager and most of the standardized approaches are stipulated by the lease agreement. In downtown, which is made up of numerous independent operators, the Downtown Revitalization Committee will be required to stimulate merchants into organizing into a collective body. But first, as is the case with individual merchants, they must be made aware of the benefits of, and techniques for, developing a collective marketing strategy.

Four collective marketing techniques, all of which are used to great advantage by shopping malls, can be considered in developing a marketing strategy for downtown. These four techniques are described as follows.

1. Standardized Hours

The standardization of store hours is an important advantage of the shopping mall in that consumers can reasonably expect all outlets to be open for business at certain specified times. Such is not the case in many downtown where both late night and daytime opening may often vary. The only day the consumer can bank on having access to all outlets is Saturday. Varying hours of operation can result in inconvenience, annoyance and frustration to the consumer and belies the image of downtown as a one-stop shopping centre. The ill-will created by the inconvenience consumers experience as a result of erratic business hours can easily be avoided by agreeing upon set hours of operation. Merchants in Fort Macleod, and more recently in Devon, have benefitted from standardized hours and have found that on Thursday and Friday nights, downtown is a busy place. Remember that the agreed upon hours must be well publicized.

2. Coordinated Sales Events

Coordinated sales events have already been discussed under the guise of promotions but, because of the strong emphasis on, and need for, collective merchant participation, is also considered an important marketing tool. Marketing and promotional strategies are often synonymous since they share common objectives. No other type of promotional event, however, is as dependent upon the support and active participation of every downtown merchant. The collective approach to sales events can work effectively only if individual marketing techniques are used. The sales merchandise of each merchant must be appropriate for the seasonal or holiday theme selected for the event and complement that of other merchants. Sidewalk sales, Christmas sales, back-to-school sales, all require a strong measure of individual marketing "know how" that must be channeled into a coordinated effort.

3. Collective Advertising

The collective advertising of downtown as a collective shopping entity in the local newspaper and broadcasting media is an effective method of reaching a large segment of your consumer market and changing the way people think about, and perceive, downtown. Just as advertising that says "Come to West Edmonton Mall" can influence and attract consumers, so can advertising that says, "Come Shop Downtown". By advertising frequently on the radio, for example, as a collective unit with each merchant contributing towards, and sharing the cost, consumers can be persuaded to stand up and take notice and possibly decide that shopping downtown is a good idea worth trying. Similarly, because costs can be shared, full page newspaper features, advertising downtown and the many shopping opportunities available, are feasible. It is important to remember that for advertising to be effective, it must be persistent. A "one-shot" effort is of little benefit. It is also important to be consistent, ensuring that slogans and graphic displays, and a special logo are readily identifiable and associated with downtown.

4. Coordinated Window Displays

Coordinated window displays are an extremely effective and inexpensive form of advertising for individual merchants. Collective coordination of window displays, however, can increase their effectiveness substantially and, more than any other marketing tool, promote a positive image for downtown. When based upon common themes, coordinated displays can reinforce neighbouring displays to everyone's mutual benefit.

For maximum benefit, consider coordinating window displays with newspaper advertising as well. One very popular and successful method for encouraging good quality coordinated window displays and collective merchant participation is to hold regular "Display of the Month" contests.

NOTE ...

"Display of the Month" contests have been used in nearly every community in which Heritage Canada has participated. Prizes need not be elaborate and may consist of a simple plaque donated by a group such as the Downtown Revitalization Committee or other merchant groups. Major corporations such as ESSO or financial institutions such as banks are good sources of sponsorship since their image as a benefactor is promoted.

The collective marketing strategy which can be developed using the foregoing techniques will allow you to create a common image, make shopping more convenient, and attract more customers without losing the special individuality which characterizes downtown.

WINDOW DISPLAYS

Window displays are more then just an inexpensive form of effective advertising and marketing. In effect, window displays introduce the retailer to the customer. "The window is the store's face; it gives the customer an all important first impression".[11] Through quality and style, an image is created and a store's presence is established. There are many additional advantages that result from effective window displays. Unlike newspaper advertising, merchandise is displayed in life size and natural colours can be used. It is the point of purchase and can draw customers inside. "A window display is a life size, full colour advertisement" and if executed with imagination and flair, can "grab" customers and get them to stop, look, and into the shop. But, "like all good advertising, a display requires careful planning and execution".[12]

Eight factors that must be considered in planning and executing an effective window display have been identified on the basis of the revitalization projects examined and the work of knowledgeable marketing experts.[13]

1. Consider Your Priorities

- Are you trying to develop a certain image?
- Are you trying to attract new customers?
- Are you introducing a new service or product line?
- Are you highlighting a special promotional event?

2. Draw Up a Display Schedule

It is important to change displays as frequently as possible. This will:

- keep the display timely;
- familiarize customers with available selection;
- assist in good maintenance; and,
- continually capture attention.

The benefits of keeping a display timely and interesting is exemplified by a storeowner's experience in Perth, Ontario who hired a window display artist one Christmas. "Articles sold so well that the display had to be changed three times in the pre-Christmas season."[14]

3. Consider What to Put in the Window

This is where imagination can take over, the type of imaginative thinking that will "grab" the customer. The window should be considered a stage. "Think of creating a sense of theatre, incorporating drama, humour, fantasy, romance or controversy".[15] Themes around a seasonal event, promotions or new product line can be considered.

4. Look At Available Space

Consider the height, width and depth of the window as well as available space and position merchandise to work effectively in that space. Allow for some open space and do not overcrowd. Keep merchandise grouped together so that the eye does not wander aimlessly.

5. Consider Props For Your Display

"They help to develop the theme ... and act as the backdrop for the product".[16] They need not be expensive and can be as simple as tree stumps or dried flowers. Try exchanging stock with other merchants and crediting them with a small sign. "A children's shop, for example, may use a bicycle from a sporting goods shop".[17]

In using signs as part of a display, make them look professional so as not to detract from the display. Ensure signs do not hide or dominate the display except if special sales are being promoted.

6. Consider Colour as a Key Component

"It affects everyone, consciously or unconsciously, promoting an emotional response."[18] It is important to understand how people relate to colour and information is available from your local library and merchandising magazines. For example, blues have a cooling and soothing effect, deep royal blues suggest sophistication and royalty and red connotes warmth, life and vibrancy. Try experimenting with different combinations and note people's reactions.

7. Lighting Plays an Important Role

Window displays should be lit night and day since they are viewed over a 24 hour period. Inexpensive, unobtrusive track lighting is very effective because of the flexibility provided.

8. Maintenance Is Crucial

Poor maintenance and the "dead fly syndrome" can ruin the visual effect of even the most stunning displays. The fresh, "first-day" look can only be retained through regular cleaning.

The foregoing points illustrate that executing good window displays need not be difficult or expensive. There is a definite art involved, but with some simple "know-how", research and investigation, the art can be acquired. Seminars have proven a very effective means of educating merchants on the art of window displays and can be arranged by the Downtown Revitalization Committee with the assistance of various government agencies (see Technical Resource 3). The merchants themselves can organize and arrange workshops by bringing in visual marketing experts. Window displays are a key tool for effective marketing and provide an opportunity which is available to everyone with a window.

Recruitment

Business recruitment and expansion is an important consideration in marketing downtown. Shopping malls tackle this consideration and protect their investment by hiring a mall manager who is constantly searching for prospective tenants who can improve the mall's performance standards by providing the retail mix consumers demand. The mall manager "knows what the retail mix should be, what sort of commercial spaces are available, which outlets are performing well, and which should be replaced".[19] Downtown must also acquire such information and understand the implications. Competitive pressures imposed by shopping centres, strip centres and, possibly, neighbouring communities, often result in a need:

- To increase the array of goods and services.
- To increase the number of places to shop.

The former may be accomplished through existing businesses expanding their product lines. The latter suggests recruitment. Recruitment may also be the most effective means available for providing a greater array of goods and services since existing downtown merchants could be restricted in the number of product lines they can feasibly carry.

Another reason for considering recruitment as a marketing tool relates to downtown's image. "Vacant shops are a big problem. They give an area a rundown look. They make downtown look like a loser. It's very important to find tenants for empty shops".[20] Some general suggestions for overcoming the problem are as follows:

- Advertise in newspaper and trade journals.
- Advise the business world that "we've done a study which shows this area needs a shoe store".
- "Go to a community some distance away and say to a shop owner - you have a successful store here, how about opening a branch in our town".[21]
- Attract tenants through lower rents if possible.

HERITAGE CANADA

Perhaps a city-owned building or a building that has been standing vacant for a long time could be considered as a low rent prospect. After all, some rent is better than no rent. Attendance and displays at trade fairs is yet another recruitment technique.

Although the foregoing general guidelines are valid, they clearly demonstrate the need for:

- doing your homework, and
- developing a strategy,

particularly since the most effective means of recruitment is active solicitation of prospective businesses. To do this, you must have all the answers, know which businesses to approach, and how to approach them. "There is no magic to recruitment. It demands commitment and long hours. Tenants are brought into a community, they rarely walk in unassisted."[22] The group assigned the task of developing a strategy and recruiting businesses must include local councillors and/or town staff representatives since both private and public sector assistance and involvement are required.

THE PROCESS

Marketing experts with Heritage Canada have identified a process for the development of a recruitment strategy based upon practical experience. The National Trust for Historic Preservation also has developed a simple and particularly relevant process that can be applied in any community and allows for considerable flexibility in terms of effort and resource requirements. These two processes have been melded into the following five step procedure for business recruitment.

1. Understand Your Market

Some of the data needed to understand your market may be available from your evaluation exercise in Section 2. The data required should include both a demographic inventory which identifies:

- population of trade area,
- number and size of households,
- per capita and household incomes,
- population by age group,
- gaps identified and perceived by the consumer in downtown,

and an inventory of existing businesses in downtown and the competition. This data will enable you not only to identify what sort of retail mix downtown now has and could potentially support, but is information prospective businesses will demand.

The demographic data can be obtained from agencies such as Alberta Bureau of Statistics and Statistics Canada and should be tailored to suit the information needs of each particular business you are trying to recruit. For example, if you want to recruit a children's store, be sure that the proportion of the population aged 15 years or less is further broken down into infants, preschool, ages six to twelve and teens.

2. Inventory Available Downtown Buildings

Consider the type of space available for prospective businesses and prepare a profile of each building which includes:

- Date and type of construction.
- Size.
- Amenities.
- Facilities/utilities.
- Land use district classification.
- Occupancy.
- Available space.
- Rent.
- Taxes.
- Selling price.
- Leasing conditions.
- Contact persons.

Some of this information may be available from your evaluation material collected earlier in the process. Remember, however, that the profiles are specific to a particular building and must be kept current.

3. Identify a Preferred Retail Mix

A retail mix should be primarily based upon what your market demands and can support. Build from the existing retail mix. Your profile of available commercial space can assist you in identifying a preferred mix. Consider how this space can be used to help improve the retail mix. Set **reasonable** objectives. Do not expect an Eaton's or a Bowrings to locate in your community if your trade area population is 10,000 persons or less.

4. Prepare A Marketing Brochure

Three rules should be followed in preparing a market brochure:

- Keep it simple. Include only salient facts about your community, such as location, population, transportation access, major amenitities, and about the market including trade area population, number of households, income levels and age structure. State that more detailed information can be made available to interested businesses.

- Keep it flexible. Do not print anything in the brochure which is likely to change in six months. A brochure designed with pockets that can be filled with up-to-date information is a good idea.

- Make it useful. Include information designed to attract specific businesses downtown needs in order to provide a desirable retail mix.

5. Target New Businesses

Now that you have identified what businesses downtown needs, canvass your community and trade area for successful businesses that may be interested in expanding, diversifying or relocating. Start in your own downtown. This may be your best source for potential new retailers. Approach the competition. They may be interested in participating in downtown's revitalization. Try businesses located in other communities within a 100 or even 200 kilometre radius. Remember to approach the small independent retailer as well as larger national chains. It is the independent retailer that is the heart of downtown. Convince businesses you have an opportunity - a market they can tap. Recognize the investor's locational point of view in your approach. Remember that an investor considers two factors. First, a good community must be selected. "A good community is characterized by economic growth and overall stability, a good trading area, not too much competition, compatibility with the merchant's personality, and political cooperation."[23] Second, a good site must be selected. "A good site is characterized by appropriate traffic flow and accessibility, location of both competing and supporting stores and quality of local building codes and bylaws."[24]

Six basic points summarize what should be kept in mind to maximize chances of successfully recruiting businesses to downtown.[25] These points, which serve as a checklist and an augmentation of the five step approach, are listed below:

1. Begin at once and close to home. Contact every merchant who can be considered a good addition for downtown. Most small store leases are obtained by direct personal contact.

2. Survey all existing businesses for expansion or relocation needs that can be satisfied within the downtown. This can free up space that is better suited for different types of retailing.

3. Survey local suppliers, wholesalers, co-operatives and franchise organizations for prospective new tenants. Keep in touch, and provide current, usable information.

4. Follow and verify every lead.

5. Know your market potential. Know where there are gaps in goods and service. Decide which types of businesses are best and go after them.

6. Repeat the whole process again and again.

Remember, there is no magic formula for recruitment. You must use initiative, tap all your available resources including the input and advice of local merchants, bankers, realtors and town officials, and be persistent. Recruiting takes time and effort. Success does not come easily or quickly. The reward, however, is the creation of a better, more diverse, interesting and competitive downtown, and can be well worth the effort.

NEW DEVELOPMENT

By implication, the recruitment techniques described thus far assume the occupancy of existing spaces. But what of new development? Attracting development requires a different approach than that of recruitment of businesses, as well as a firm understanding of the complexities of the development industry and a grasp of the developer's language. Ken Munkacy, Senior Associate of Halcyon Ltd. in Washington D.C., recently prepared, on behalf of the National Trust, a concise and informative outline on how to attract new development to downtown. A review of his material suggests a necessary prerequisite for attracting development - it is largely, but not solely, the purview and responsibility of the municipality. The public and private sectors must work jointly towards a common objective.

If a community is interested in attracting new development, it is important that it:

- understand the development process;
- know what kind of development is best suited for downtown; and,
- know how to use a variety of incentives to attract the development it wants.

It must be recognized that development is a complex process and that developers often seek assurances in the form of public sector participation or creative financing to lessen the perceived risks of putting projects downtown. These complexities can be better understood by knowing who are the developers, and how the process works. Developers may be from within your own community or from larger centres. They may be individuals, limited corporations or partnerships. The major elements of the development process are summarized as follows:[26]

1. What Does the Developer Look For?

   - Market potential.
   - Available land.
   - Evidence of an organized community.
   - Available financing.

2. What Are the Developer's Concerns?

   - Is the project feasible?
   - What are the risk factors, the uncertainties, the constraints?
   - Who is for or against the project?
   - What are the benefits - the projected revenues and after tax returns?
   - What are the pressure points - can they be overcome?

3. What are the Common Issues in Downtown Development?

   - Parking - how much is required and who pays for it?
   - Regulatory environment - land use district, building codes, design review process.
   - Public amenities and improvements - who pays for them?
   - Required guarantees and commitments.

The National Trust provides the following suggestions on how a community can address these concerns. Again, much of the onus is placed on the public sector - the municipal government.

1. **Learn to speak the developer's language.** Assemble information on the market, on downtown's prospects, on development opportunities. Much of the information gathered for your business recruitment strategy can be revamped to meet the developer's information needs.

2. **Put forth a united front.** Demonstrate that the project is backed and supported by public and private groups. Offer easy access to key officials and business leaders.

3. **Define the expected process.** Provide a clear road map for the local regulatory approval process. Also, spell out the nature of commitments and required guarantees.

4. **Identify what the municipality can do to assist the developer.** Someone should be assigned to marshal the project through the approval process and incentives could be identified and discussed.

5. **Understand basic financing techniques.** Only then can you really speak the developers language and understand the process.

Town administrative staff, the Chamber of Commerce, bank and finance company managers and your planner can all assist you in understanding the process of development. Make use of their expertise.

PHYSICAL REVITALIZATION TECHNIQUES

Numerous examples of downtown physical revitalization approaches are evident across Canada. Some stress beautification, some restoration, while others concentrate on cosmetic "facelifts" or the development of themes. Some approaches have worked, others have not. The most successful examples have tackled physical revitalization with sensitivity, and have capitalized upon existing resources - those special and unique features of downtown that provide a sense of history, community and tradition - a sense of "place". Such resources are found in every downtown and, although they may vary, often provide opportunities for creating a physical image that can change the illusion of downtown as being tired or outdated, garner the confidence of merchants and shoppers alike, and boost community pride. In Perth, Ontario, this pride is clearly evident according to Steve Forster, editor of the Perth Courier. "Physically", says Mr. Forster, "the entire town has never looked better and local politicians believe the restoration of the core has given homeowners new pride".[27] People are beginning to care more about the appearance of their homes and "messy yards" are a thing of the past. "Even the decrease in vandalism is believed to be attributable to downtown's new image."[28] Mr. Forster quotes Perth's Police Chief as saying "if you put people in a nice environment, they will react better".[29]

Some of the more successful examples of physical revitalization approaches include those sponsored by Heritage Canada in communities such as Perth, Ontario, Windsor, Nova Scotia, and Fort Macleod, Alberta. The Heritage Canada approach hinges on a concept of revitalization through preservation and restoration - that is, building on what already exists, and ensuring the right mixture of storefront improvements, public improvements, beautification, and maintenance considerations. This is not to say that new development or redevelopment is bad, but that it must be carefully integrated and appropriate in scale thereby ensuring that existing development is complemented.

Successful integration of newly developed shopping malls in downtown has occurred in Victoria, Charlottetown and Peterborough. These developments are an integral part of downtown and "don't turn their backs on mainstreet, they're not islands drawing business away from established stores."[30] It is essential that any new development, be it a mall or an individual building, complement downtown by being the right size and featuring the right mixture of outlets. For most small Alberta communities, a downtown mall is neither an economically feasible nor a likely proposition or, if developed, could cause serious competition to existing downtown businesses unless it can become an integral part of the downtown. In some smaller Alberta communities, where malls have been developed on the periphery of downtown, the emphasis and focus also has been drawn away from mainstreet.

AN EXAMPLE ...

Heritage Canada cites Cornwall, Ontario's downtown mall as an example of the adverse impact downtown can suffer at the hands of new development. Cornwall's downtown mall "stands at a strategic point at one end of the town's main street. It is surrounded by acres of parking. As you move down the street away from the mall, more and more shops stand empty. The mall has ruined downtown: it dominates its surroundings and has sucked life from what was there before".[31]

Usually, the downtowns of larger communities are better able to absorb and integrate a new mall type of development, be it a strip or centre form of development. Grande Prairie, Alberta (population 25,000) and Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan (population 34,000) are both contemplating such developments. In Grande Prairie, new development is being contemplated in concert with a massive "beautification" program, funded through the recently formed BRZ, and with the creation of a "mall type atmosphere" in the historic downtown. The beautification budget is set at $28,000 and the creation of the "mall type atmosphere", which envisions a refurbishing of the downtown sidewalk system, mid-block crossings of stone matrix, garbage receptacles and trees, is estimated to cost $400,000. A portion of the $400,000 will be raised through the BRZ. In Moose Jaw, the new shopping mall/office complex will include the restoration and integration of some existing historic buildings and will be considered in conjunction with the Heritage Canada project currently underway.

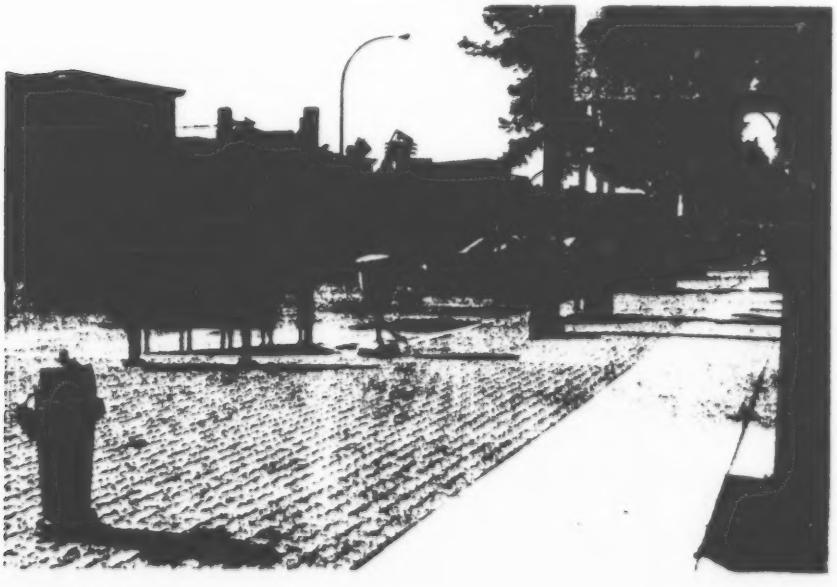
One approach which has proven popular, but has met with limited success, is the development of a "theme village". Such development, however, must be approached with caution and must be appropriate to the region and local history of the area. Otherwise, downtown may suffer a loss of its sense of community and tradition, as well as an artificiality which is difficult to keep up and is out of place. Eventually, as enthusiasm wanes and people become tired of the artificial theme, facades can become "tacky" and uncared for, particularly since they often entail high maintenance costs. The resources which can make downtown special and unique become submerged and may be lost forever.

SOME EXAMPLES ...

Kimberly and Osoyoos, B.C., and Battleford, Saskatchewan, provide three examples of the "theme village" approach. Kimberly has been transformed into a Bavarian village in keeping with its alpine setting and developing fame as a ski centre. Half-timbered facades and gothic lettering were encouraged and approximately 80 percent of downtown's building have been converted. Osoyoos, at the southern end of the Okanagan Valley has adopted a Spanish motif which recognizes "the increasing number of Portuguese families in the vicinity and the region's dry, hot Mediterranean type climate."[32] Battleford has selected the "Wild West" motif, comprised of rustic cedar-faced buildings with leaning porches and posts. These three examples suggest that whatever theme is selected, it should be appropriate in some way to the local region.

Other approaches which have been attempted with little success have been the closing down of streets and public improvement/beautification schemes. Street closures create pedestrian malls by eliminating vehicular traffic. There is a danger in disrupting traditional traffic flows, not to mention the chaos created during the construction and rerouting period which will discourage people from coming downtown. Also, alternate parking within easy walking distance must be provided. This concept can work in some parts of the country, but is highly dependent upon climatic conditions. In Victoria's downtown, where year-round, mild weather allows for numerous outdoor facilities and interaction, the concept has proven reasonably successful. In colder climates, outdoor pedestrian malls may prove less succcessful.

The successful examples of physical revitalization capable of creating an image that the community can be proud of, and of attracting and improving business, are those that build upon existing resources and, include sensitive infill. All the relevant elements and necessary ingredients such as building facades, maintenance, beautification, public improvements, signage and parking consideration, as well as pedestrian and traffic flows, are considered. The issue of parking and the relationship between pedestrian and traffic movements is very much a local issue that is community specific. Your planner, architect and/or traffic engineer will be able to develop a comprehensive circulation system that suits the needs and objectives of your downtown.



A total package for downtown physical revitalization requires the development of a design concept. A comprehensive design concept should spell out:

- Your objectives.
- The image you want to achieve.
- How buildings, and in particular store fronts, as well as backs, can be revamped to achieve this image.
- Where sensitive infill may be necessary.
- How signs can implement the image.
- What public improvements and beautification features are required to support the image.
- Desirable circulation patterns and parking availability that can make the scheme work.
- How it can all be maintained at a reasonable cost.

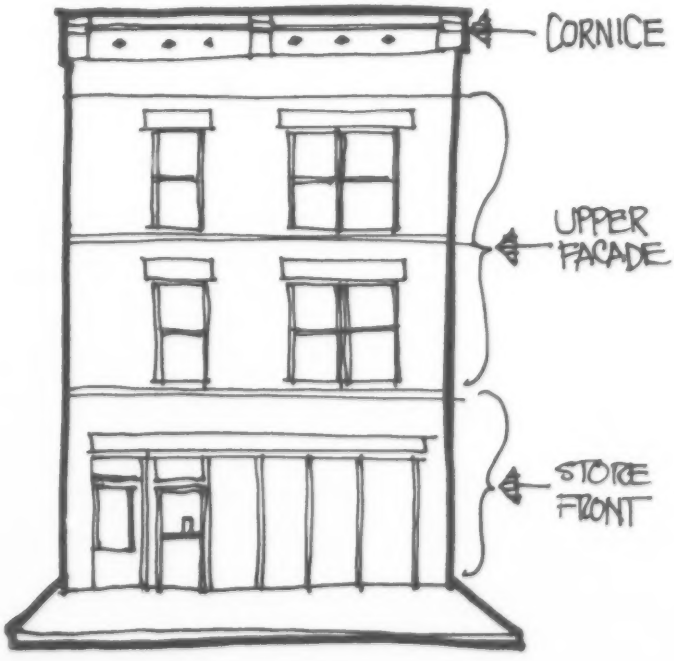
Detailed guidelines for most of these elements of a physical design concept are defined in Technical Resource 4, A Handbook for Facade Improvements and Technical Resource 5, A Handbook for Public Area Improvements. A general discussion of the approaches available and their implications for existing buildings, infill development, downtown signage and public improvements is provided below.

Existing Buildings

The buildings, monuments and landmarks that make up downtown are its most important physical asset. Buildings in particular, are a testimony of a community's past - why it was established, during what historic period, who were the town fathers? Preservation of such buildings in a manner sensitive not only to its original architecture, but its functional use and owner's financial capability, can be a major contributor towards vastly improving the overall appearance of downtown and creating a desired image. Buildings do not have to be landmarks or historic gems to warrant attention. Even those which appear commonplace with little architectural or aesthetic merit can be made more appealing with minor, albeit well thought out, rehabilitation. The point is, it makes good economic and functional sense to restore, revitalize, rehabilitate or renovate what already exists.

Historic buildings are commonly comprised of three distinct parts including:

- **the storefront,** which is at pedestrian level, is used to display goods, and provides the entrance to the building itself;



- **the upper facade,** which is the mass of one or more additional storeys used for a variety of purposes; and,
- **the cornice,** which marks the termination of the building with the sky and was traditionally treated with great flourish and extravagance.

Any insensitive change to a building can destroy not only the balance between the building facade's three parts, but also the complementary balance between buildings that took years to achieve. Historic preservation "does not mean returning downtown to a particular style or year, nor does it entail restoring buildings to museum standards".[33] What it does mean, and what has proven to be most effective, is combining the best of historic architecture with the best of contemporary design. This could involve such undertakings as:

- minimal rehabilitation;
- removal of inappropriate elements, such as oversized signs, and better maintenance;
- reconstruction of storefronts that have been badly remodelled; and,
- improving a building that lacks architectural character through a contemporary design solution.

Whatever work is undertaken, however, should be compatible with, relate to, and visually reinforce, the remaining buildings in downtown.

NOTE ...

"Revitalization through preservation is the least expensive and most effective long term solution to the resurrection of faltering downtown cores in communities across Canada" according to John Stewart. There are a lot of cheap fixes that are splashy, but they don't work over the long haul."[34] Numerous examples of storefront renovations that have taken this "splashy" approach are evident in Canadian downtowns. His contention is supported by Tom Moriarity of the U.S. National Trust for Historic Preservation. According to Mr. Moriarity, the older buildings which are most often found downtown were designed to complement and visually reinforce each other.

When considering a program for physically improving the existing buildings which make-up downtown, be it through major or minor restoration, rehabilitation, renovation or revitalization, a simple four-point design philosophy, based upon the experience of communities such as Nelson, should always be kept in mind.

- Consider affordability - the gearing of improvements to available budget.
- Respect the original fabric.
- Provide sympathetic design solutions.
- Ensure low maintenance.

Many of the renovations undertaken on Nelson's buildings were "made necessary simply because of previous poor maintenance of those buildings."[35] Much of the work is not additive, but rather, requires the removal of accumulated surfaces, paint, stucco, inappropriate signs, or just plain grime. Remember that no new surface is as durable and honest as the original material. "The prime goal of a design scheme," after all, should be "to minimize maintenance requirements by relying on the quality of the original materials and by making the building perform and weather better."[36] Maintenance and durability, therefore, are key considerations in undertaking any physical improvement program for downtown. Practical approaches to improving existing building facades are provided in Technical Resource 4 of this Kit.

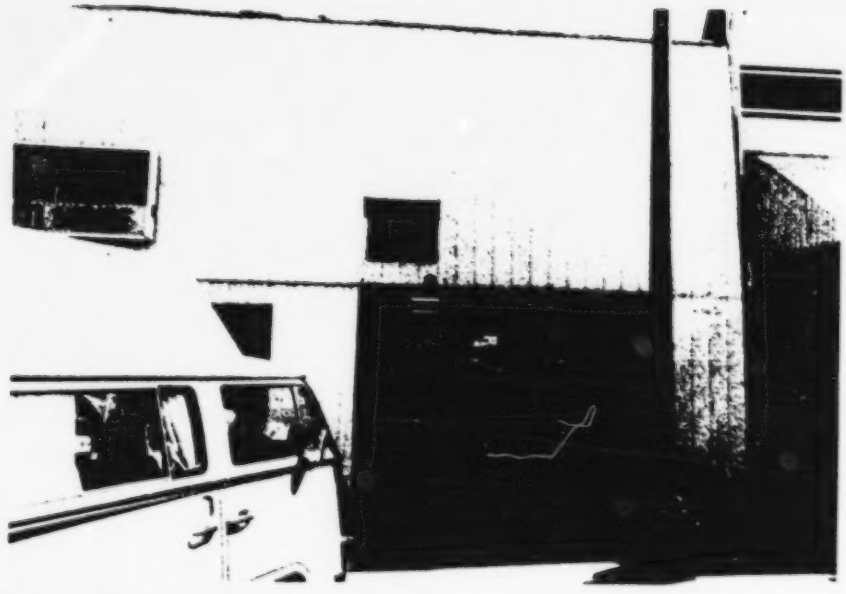
When contemplating revitalization, it is important to remember that "the building itself and its rich history offer opportunities for revitalization. Rarely do we have to invent history. Revitalization is, instead, a question of knowing what is there and how to find it."[37] Knowing what is there and how to find it requires five steps.

- Research the visual history of an old building through the use of old photographs, sketches or paintings.
- Based upon the historical research, develop a complete understanding of the building's past metamorphosis.
- Examine the physical details of the building.
- Undertake an assessment of the condition or absence of typical facade elements.
- Carry out an investigative demolition process whereby the crust of more recent renovations are stripped and the historic fabric underneath is examined.

Three final important factors should be considered when dealing with downtown building improvements. First, for a downtown embarking on a program, several years may be required for execution of that program. "Minor changes to store-front appearance can be a good short term goal until longer term initiatives begin to bear fruit. In time, as more buildings have paid attention to facades and storefronts, the cumulative effect can be startling."[38] Second, it is not necessary to restore a building to the exact condition it enjoyed the day it was built. And third, "it is important to stress that buildings often do not need large amounts of money poured into them to make them look good."[39]

SOME EXAMPLES ...

The three factors dealing with downtown building improvements identified herein are based upon the considerable practical experience of the Heritage Canada Coordinator and Downtown Development Officer in Nelson, B.C. Nelson has undertaken a relatively major large scale physical restoration program. The following examples of restoration projects illustrate the practicality of the three factors:



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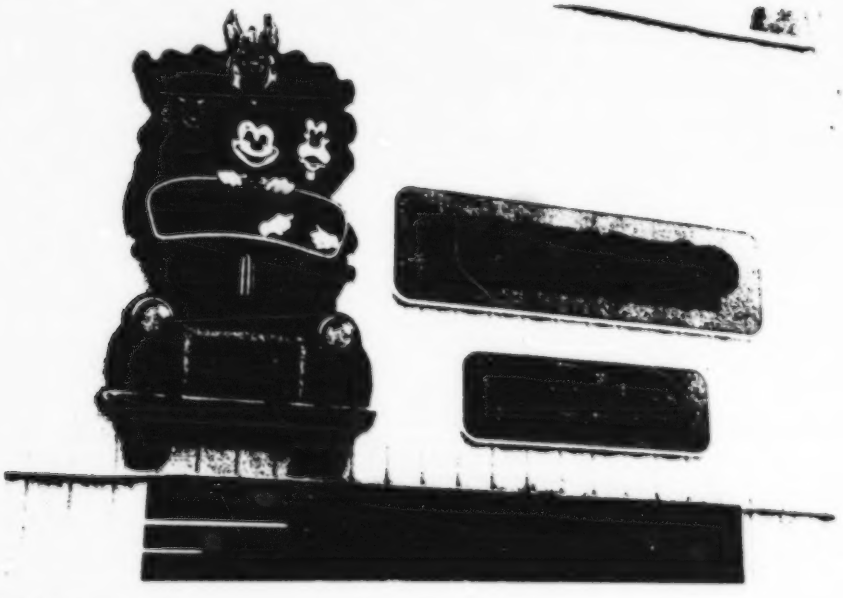

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1. The Comic Shop in Nelson was made more attractive and interesting with minimal alteration. Alterations to the building and major restoration was rejected by the owner from the outset. The vinyl siding was maintained since it was in good condition. Instead, a large air-conditioner which was a visually disturbing facade element was transformed. "A Plywood sign was made into the shape of a car filled with comic book characters, and the air conditioner became the grill." All that was required was a little imagination, and about $500.

2. The Jeans and Joggers Shop in Windsor, Nova Scotia is a simple two-storey structure surrounded by more imposing buildings. To create a smart "new" building, a mid cornice was boxed in with plywood and a new upper cornice was built. "Colour choices ... a slate grey for the wood and a sandstone yellow for the cornice, suggest a far more sturdy and substantial building than is the case."[40] This was attained for $600.

3. In Nelson, rehabilitation to the Annable block, a two storey commercial row, took a clutter of materials, awnings and signs which characterized six storefronts and upper storey offices and created a crisp new image. The building was stripped of all non-original materials and cleaned with chemicals and water. Original windows were liberated or recreated with plywood and mouldings. A paint scheme which expressed the structural bays, separated each shop, highlighted decorative features and harmonized with the new awnings was implemented. The new awnings which were selected on the basis of historical research, provide shade, and serve as a setting for compatible signs positioned on the valances. The budget for this project was $20,000, or about $3,000 per store.

4. More costly renovations, involving major facade changes, have also been undertaken as is the case of Hipperson's Home Hardware in Nelson. The objective was to create a clean new image for a national chain hardware store which was situated in a modern building on a corner site. The building did not fit in with its older brick and stone neighbours and had been built without a cornice, with large horizontal upper storey windows, and was finished with a stucco surface. Specific goals were:

- To diminish the horizontal look of the second storey addition to harmonize with the neighbouring buildings.
- To decrease the projection distance of the canopy.
- To discourage vandalism of signs.
- To incorporate signs identifying the chain store but still maintaining the owners identity.
- To weatherproof front doors and window.
- To achieve all these goals with as little interference with business as possible.

As such, all disruptive work was done on Sundays. With the stripping of all unnecessary signs and clutter, patching of the stucco, a well thought out paint scheme, relocation of the Home Hardware sign, new awnings, and new doors and windows - a bright, eye-catching expanse which harmonizes with the neighbouring buildings and "serves Home Hardware well as dramatic advertising" was achieved. The total cost was $14,000.

Table 3 provides cost estimates of simple clean-up to major restoration work undertaken in Nelson, B.C. It should be noted that the Heritage Canada Coordinator and the Downtown Development Officer provided the merchants with direction in creating designs, in preparing tenders and in obtaining financing. Their time costs are not included in these estimates. The estimates were compiled by the Regional District of Central Kootenay.

The merchants in Nelson contributed approximately one half of the cost while various public sector programs provided the remaining funds. Some of the less obvious local benefits which can be attributed to the Nelson physical restoration program include:

- The creation of up to 180 construction jobs during the restoration period.
- The development of the local cottage industry which produces buildings materials and signs.
- An increase in the number of visitors attracted to the downtown as a result of its new appearance.

These less obvious benefits are important contributors towards generating community support and involvement.

TABLE 3 ESTIMATED COST OF BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS MAIN STREET PROGRAMME, NELSON, B.C.

BUILDING	WORK UNDERTAKEN	ESTIMATED COST
Annable Block	Painting, Awnings	20,000
Bank of Commerce	Cleaning	2,000
Beresford Block	Stripping, cleaning Brick work, awning	12,000
Bill's Motor Inn	Painting	3,500
Burns	Cleaning, stucco, Painting	7,000
Cathedral Mary Immaculate	Roofing	8,000
City Fire Hall	Major restoration Sympathetic construction	80,000
City Hall	Cleaning, restoration	40,000
Danny's Deli/Art Stevens	Re-creation	17,500
Darwins	Painting	600
Eagles Block	Restoration	20,000
Emory's	Painting, carpentry, awnings	14,000
Hipperson	Painting, awning	14,000
K.C. Restaurant	Masonry, woodwork, Painting, cleaning	10,000
Kootenay Exchange	Restoration	20,000
Koutuntas Building	Painting, awnings	15,500
Littlewood	Painting, cleaning, stucco	3,500
Lyons	Canopy	14,000
Main Street Diner	Painting, doors	2,000
Malone Manor	Restoration	15,000
McDonald Mason Realty	Cleaning, painting, Windows	27,000
Medical Arts Buildings	Painting	11,000
Nelson Home Furnishings	Awning	3,000
New Leaf/Ski Shops	Painting, awnings	5,000
Norm's Sport Center	Wood construction, painting	28,500
Ramsay's	Signage	1,500
Razors Edge	Painting, awning	3,000
RHC Realty	Restoration	53,000
Royal Hotel	Cleaning, painting	9,200
Sears	Awning, woodwork, stucco	9,200
Sonja's China	Cleaning, painting, awning	8,000
Sterling Home Furnishings	Restoration, awning	11,000
Ted Allen	Renovation	5,500
Trans Canada Glass	Painting	3,500
Tu-Dor Lock/Hospital Employee Union	Painting/windows	5,000
Vogue/McLauchlin	Canopy	17,000
Wood Valance	Painting, canopy	20,000

Infill Development

Just as vacant buildings give downtown a rundown, tired appearance, vacant lots or gaps, resulting from fire or demolition, detract from its image of busy vibrancy. Such lots provide opportunities for infill development. Although new development should respect and "fit in" with its neighbours, attempts to duplicate old style buildings in the realities of today's contemporary marketplace are impractical. What is required is a harmony which respects the typical "accumulation of buildings over many years, at slightly different heights, widths, styles and materials."[41] It is this typical accumulation of structures that makes downtown interesting and unique.

Seven infill design approaches have been applied in most downtowns, some of which are more sympathetic than others.[42] It must be recognized, however, that each design problem is truly unique and a solution which fits one location may be entirely wrong for another. Each downtown must develop its own appropriate solution. The seven approaches are briefly summarized as follows:

1. **Indifferent Intervention** - This approach does not respond in any way to the surrounding environment and is often the manner in which infill actually occurs.

2. **Integration** - This approach attempts to harmonize the new building with those adjacent to it through the use of similar form, size, detail, material, and colour.

3. **Contrast** - This approach is the antithesis of integration in that a building is deliberately contrasted with its neighbours for visual effect. This is particularly effective for important buildings such as banks, churches, or post offices. Through proper design, the contrast can be achieved in a sympathetic manner.

4. **Precarious Approach** - The intent is to create a temporary structure to house an activity which may or may not continue. An opportunity for imaginative design is provided in that different themes are more acceptable if it is known that the structure may not be permanent. "An entrance arch to a farmer's market proposed for Fort Macleod has been designed in this spirit." The arch which is at one end of a vacant lot, reflects downtown's character but in a more "playful ... and exuberant fashion than might be accepted in a permanent structure."[43]

5. Invisible Approach - This is a recent innovation and is best characterized by mirror-glass buildings which tend to reflect their surroundings and make little impact on the street.

6. Analogous Approach - This approach recreates certain aspects of the environment in new buildings while also introducing a modern touch.

7. Combined Approach - This combines several of the previous approaches to satisfy a number of conflicting design requirements. "It may be possible to break down a project into its diverse components and apply the appropriate design solution to each component in turn while not sacrificing the overall unity of the project."[44]

For any one of the approaches taken, it is recommended that a design professional or architect be involved and be required to coordinate the infill project with downtown's image.

SOME EXAMPLES ...

In many cases, it may prove cheaper to rehabilitate a derelict or vacant structure than tear it down and rebuild. This approach is referred to as "adaptive re-use" and pertains to structures which "seem outdated and ugly to one generation but may be a heritage gem to another".[45] Most Alberta downtown contains an abandoned garage, a theatre which has closed down, a church which is no longer required or an institutional building which can no longer service its function. If structurally sound, such buildings could be put to another use. For example:

- In Cambridge, Ontario, a church has become a theatre.
- In Bridgetown, Nova Scotia, a church became the home of the Rothsay Masonic Lodge.
- Also in Bridgetown, a restaurant was required and found unlikely premises in a converted gas station.
- Similarly, in Cambridge, the abandoned post office became the Old Post Office Restaurant.
- The old post office in Moose Jaw became the City Hall.

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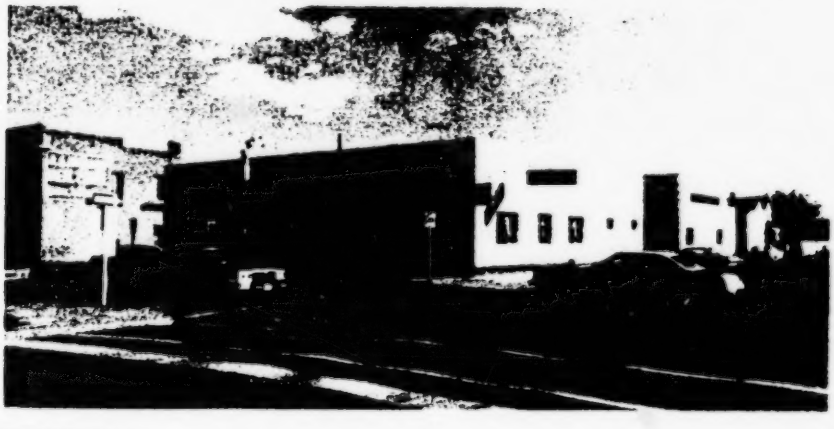
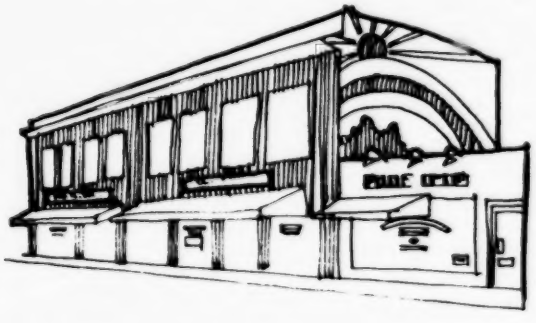


HERITAGE CANADA

Once again, with imagination and good design, buildings which seem of little value can be put to good use.

Signs

"Since the first merchant hung out his shingle, signs have had a single purpose-to tell the potential customer he has found the right place to do business. Fashions and styles have come and gone, but a legible, clearly identifiable sign has always been an indispensable tool of the astute merchant."[46].



NOTE...

Much of the information contained herein is based upon the work of Mr. Gordon Fulton, the Heritage Canada Coordinator for Moose Jaw and formerly of the Market Street Restoration Agency in Corning, New York. Mr. Fulton has made a study of signs in downtown, their purpose, their evolution, how they can affect the physical image of downtown, types of signs and their intended targets, what makes a good sign, and the actual elements of a sign.

The primary purpose of a sign is not just to identify and locate a business, but to catch the customer's eye. By:

- reflecting an image of the business,
- providing products information, and
- attracting attention,

signs can create an image of downtown. The importance of good signage, therefore, should not be overlooked.

Seven problems with the signs in today's downtowns have been identified.[47]

1. Scale - Many signs are out of scale with the buildings to which they are attached and, at times, downtown itself. Bigger is not always better.

2. Number - The apparent security in number of signs is often a false security. Redundant signage is expensive and can dwarf the impact of a building.

3. Layering - Competition to "out shout" neighbouring stores can lead to visual clutter. Signs become a distraction rather than an attraction.

4. Orientation - The automobile-oriented sign, designed to be read at greater distances and higher speeds than are normally found in downtown, have been inappropriately transferred downtown where slow moving cars and pedestrians are dominant.

5. Target - Downtown signs are often poorly targeted or not targeted at all. They are without focus and have no central point of interest.

6. Mass Production - Mass produced signs are often inappropriate. They advertise a brand name such as Coca-Cola rather than the business they adorn.

7. Deterioration - Deteriorated signs reflect the owner's attitude towards his business.

There are four types of signs based upon the method of affixing a sign to a building.[48]

1. Signboards - Signboards are flat, rectangular signs placed in a specifically designed spot, usually between the storefront and second storey. These generally carry the business name only, thereby serving as the main source of identification, and are aimed at a "cross-street vantage."

2. Window signs - Window signs are painted directly onto the inside of the main display window and are usually restricted to the business name. Such signs are aimed at the pedestrian in the immediate vicinity or across the street.

3. Hanging signs - Hanging signs are projected or hung perpendicular to the face of the building and, as well as identifying the business, often incorporate a logo or product information in a symbolic form. These signs are designed for pedestrian traffic on the sidewalk adjacent the building.

4. Awnings - Awnings, usually of canvas, provide an opportunity for painted signs. Traditionally, only the business name is displayed and can be directed to any audience depending upon which part of the awning is used (facing rake, valance or side panels).

Effective, "good" signage, requires the consideration and interaction of four factors including:

- Clarity of message.
- Logical placement.
- Accurate reflection of business image.
- Durability, quality and good maintenance.

These factors must be considered in redesigning ineffective signage as well as producing new signs. Redesigning ineffective signs in downtown is an important component of physical revitalization. In most cases, redesign is required in order to:

- Clarify the business identity.
- Focus attention on certain aspects of the business.
- Improve the building's appearance.
- Suggest a progressive attitude to the client - to create an image of change.

It is important that the major elements of a sign be understood before undertaking any redesign work. These elements include:

- Materials.
- Lettering.
- Placement.
- Style.
- Colour.
- Illumination.

Certain practical considerations are equally important including cost, regulations and local capabilities. Unlimited funds will not guarantee a good sign. For example, good quality plywood may be preferable to poor quality oak, will likely cost less, and will last longer. Regulations and ordinances must be reviewed. Regulations in many communities may be overly restrictive and stifle the variety which gives life and vitality to downtown. Conversely, they may be so lax as to adversely affect neighbouring businesses. A process for eliminating the extremes may be required. Not all methods and materials for sign production may be available locally. Nevertheless, sign production should, wherever possible, be within the capabilities of local craftsmen. Both Fort Macleod and Nelson experienced an upsurge in the local sign industry as a result of their downtown revitalization projects.

Public Improvements and Beautification

As was previously noted, a popular approach to physical revitalization of downtown in recent years has been enhancement, usually of main street, by embarking on a major capital program of public improvements. Such improvements are intended to draw people to a beautified downtown core. They may include redesign of traffic and pedestrian flows or the addition of hardware such as benches, street lamps, drinking fountains and amenity islands. The approach is appealing and is often regarded as "the universal panacea to downtown's ailments".[49] The appeal of the approach rests upon a number of factors.

First, the designers' drawings look good. The "quick fix" approach is reinforced by these drawings. Second, public funding through grant programs or privately sponsored foundations is often available. Third, public improvements provide visual evidence that something is being done and, in the short term, result in a sense of relief and satisfaction. There are, however, major pitfalls as well as advantages to public improvements. "At their best, they integrate the pleasing aesthetics of greenery and heritage fixtures with attractively renovated shops. At their worst, they can be clever fantasies that bear little relationship to the needs or character of nearby buildings and businesses".[50]

Unless careful implementation, close attention to local climate, topography and streetscapes, and consultation with residents and merchants are all considered, public improvements can have undesirable consequences.[51] For example:

1. A massive improvement program undertaken in an Ontario community took several months to complete and deterred local residents from shopping downtown. A year later there are some 20 fewer merchants than before and many attribute this to the disruptive phase.

2. Colourful sidewalks and amenity islands proved popular in summer in an Alberta town, but in winter, these sidewalks become slick and dangerous to walk on and fenders are regularly dented on the concrete abutments of the islands.

3. In a small Nova Scotia town, a T-intersection was upgraded to include attractive street islands and is now a challenge to truck manoeuvrability.

AN EXAMPLE ...

Nelson provides an interesting case study of the benefits and pitfalls of public improvements in that a unique poll of residents and merchants was conducted by Council to gauge the popularity of improvements made in downtown. The improvements consisted of:

- **New lighting infrastructure.**
- **New heritage lighting fixtures.**
- **Wheel chair access ramps.**
- **Shade trees with iron hardware.**
- **Public washrooms.**
- **Street furniture including benches, trash containers and a drinking fountain.**
- **A bus shelter with a closed display area.**

The total cost of these improvements amounted to $656,000. Funding was provided by the merchants, resident taxpayers and provincial and federal government grants. The merchants and the city each were responsible for half the costs minus the grants that were secured.

On the whole, the project was favourably received. Some noted that the improvements gave birth to a unique identity which, in turn, provided a tool for promoting downtown. Others noted that a pleasing environment was created along with a sense of activity on the street. These improvements were cited as one of the motivators for merchants to enhance their own buildings. The technical expertise and funding provided through Heritage Canada and other government grants were also major motivators. Beyond the overall enthusiasm, some interesting factors came to light. The support was overwhelming for easily maintained elements such as the street lamps, trees, moveable trash cans and conveniences for the handicapped. Support was divided for benches and widened sidewalks, and opposition was unexpectedly strong against amenity islands and mid-block pedestrian crossings. Ken Desson, writer and historical research consultant, provides the following analysis of the poll results:

> "Features that had proved difficult to clean during the summer or keep snow-free in the winter were rejected. Elements that seriously interfered with the flow of traffic or presented a potential hazard to pedestrians were unpopular. Attractions that fit the character of the street scope and enhanced the convenience of downtown shopping were strongly endorsed."[52]

The poll results further determined that too little attention was given to improving traffic flows and dealing with parking issues. The traffic and parking improvements consisted of upgrading mechanical traffic signal control mechanisms, installing pedestrian control devises at major intersections, and installing angle parking stalls on certain side streets to increase capacity. According to most residents, this functional aspect of public improvements was not adequately handled.

The Nelson example, with its mixture of positive and negative elements, as well as the remaining examples, support Heritage Canada's contention that public improvements must stress carefully-phrased development incorporating sensible accommodation of the automobile, enhanced pedestrian access and beautification in keeping with the town's character. Particularly important is the need for strong local participation and direction from a formal business organization such as the Downtown Revitalization Committee. Consulting architects "are only as good as the direction they receive".

For downtown public improvement and beautification to work, they must augment and enhance:

- attractive buildings;
- quality merchandise and service;
- convenient access by car and foot; and,
- thoughtful promotional techniques.

Public improvements alone will not bring the customer back to downtown.

The approach that works, based upon practical experience, involves five considerations:

1. It must always be remembered that stores, professional offices and civic services are downtown's chief attractions. These attractions must be made more attractive and accessible. New attractions on the street are always secondary.

2. Crash, large scale public improvement programs can result in massive disruption capable of causing the extinction of marginal businesses. Improvements must be phased and coupled with promotional events in order to limit disruption and maintain public interest.

3. Unless new amenities are of simple design, durable materials and seasonal adaptability, they become difficult and costly to maintain, invite mishaps and become the objects of vandalism.

4. If properly managed and planned, the automobile need not be banished from downtown. People are prepared to park and walk if they know they are walking to an attractive, integrated shopping area.

5. Public improvements must be paralleled by the upgrading of business facades.

This approach provides a general overview of what to consider when embarking on a public improvement program. Detailed guidelines on public improvements are provided in Technical Resource 5 of this Kit. A brief summary of salient points to remember in planning and implementing such a program is provided below.

1. Avoid using public improvements to create a totally new physical image for downtown.

2. Avoid artificial themes.

3. Establish objectives, a budget and a plan for action.

4. Include priorities and a set schedule for implementation.

5. Put functional elements in good shape before investing in beautification projects. Functional elements include such features as sidewalks, parking lots, roadways and lighting infrastructure. Beautification elements may include trees, benches, planters, garbage receptacles and lighting fixtures.

6. Consider an incremental approach instead of large scale improvements.

7. Integrate improvements with other promotional activities.

8. Design public improvements to serve as a backdrop to downtown businesses.

9. Consider physical limitations such as climate.

10. When considering parking remember that:
    - pedestrian access to parking lots is important and requires the cooperation of public and private interests;
    - separating parking for merchants and employees frees on-street parking for patrons;
    - short term parking allows constant turnover of patron traffic; and,
    - accessibility for the handicapped should be considered.

11. **Remember maintenance.** All amenities and improvements will require maintenance and, as such, it should be considered an important aspect of initial planning and budgeting. The durability of materials and availability of replacement costs should also be considered along with potential for vandalism and theft. Scheduling of a maintenance program includes seasonal planting, routine repairs and emergency repairs. Few things can detract from the vital image of downtown as effectively as planters devoid of plants during the summer season, especially if they become filled with garbage.

Conclusion

The most effective means of combining, budgeting for, implementing and understanding all the ramifications of the various aspects of physically revitalizing downtown is through the development of a physical design concept. A well prepared concept will not only define a desired image, the interrelationships of all the different elements that must be considered, and ensure all elements and work undertaken support your objective, but also provides credibility for discussing your program and for obtaining funding. A concept can put what you want to do in context. A physical design concept need not be elaborate and include detailed architectural drawings for every downtown building. Like a physical improvement program, such detailed work should be done on an incremental basis. The concept should, however, be sufficiently detailed to make a statement - to depict the image you envision for your downtown.

EVALUATION

An evaluation of a downtown revitalization program is required in order to determine if the program is working. In other words, is downtown actually being revitalized? Evaluation in this context implies a measure of success and should be undertaken once most of the longer term actions comprising your comprehensive approach are either complete or well underway.

In evaluating your program, it is essential to look beyond the obvious, tangible evidence of success such as the visual physical elements of revitalization which may include public improvements, beautification features and storefront restorations. The evaluation of the less tangible, economic elements is far more crucial for determining if your revitalization program is working. You must ascertain if business has improved, if downtown is really prospering, and if an improved physical image has resulted in a positive attitudinal change both within downtown and the community. Evaluation of these less tangible elements requires considerably more effort than do the "hard core" easily identifiable, visual elements.

To assist you in evaluating your downtown revitalization program, eleven criteria, presented in question form, have been identified which serve as a measure of success.

1. **How many vacancies now exist in downtown as compared to when the program started?**

2. **How many new businesses have located in downtown since the program started?**

3. **How many business failures have occurred since the program started as compared to before?**

4. **How many "facelift" projects have taken place since the project started?**

5. **How many businesses have reported increased sales since the program started?**

6. Can an increase in building assessment be identified as a result of improvements since the program started?

7. Have there been reports of increases in property values since the program started?

8. How many new permanent jobs have been created in downtown since the program started?

9. How many successful events can you count on continuing?

10. How has the competition fared since the pro gam started?

11. What is the media saying? Is it standing up and taking notice? Are reports positive or negative?

Most of the information needed to answer the criteria questions is easily obtainable through fields survey, discussions with downtown merchants and business groups, a few telephone calls to local realtors, discussions with key town staff, review of recent issues of the newspaper and perusal of town assessment, building permit and other files.

All of the foregoing criteria may not be applicable in your particular situation. You may be able to identify certain more appropriate criteria that have not been included. Nevertheless, the list of criteria questions provides a useful yardstick for measuring the success of your revitalization program. Remember to consider the evaluating criteria in the context of what is happening with respect to economic development both in your region and the Province.

Although only three of the Heritage Canada project communities has been evaluated thus far to measure the success of the Main Street Programme, evidence of success in all the communities can be found. In Perth, for example, three years after the Heritage Canada program started, fifteen new businesses have opened in downtown and 66 new jobs have been created. Headlines in the local newspaper which read, "Perth is Proof Business and Heritage do Mix", are not uncommon. This compares favourably with a nearby community also with a population of 6000, where 20 vacancies can still be found. This nearby community took a very limited, singular, public improvement type of approach to downtown revitalization as compared to Perth's comprehensive strategy.

In Fort Macleod, seven vacancies were reported in downtown at the start of its revitalization program three years ago. Today, all seven vacancies in downtown have been filled and seven additional businesses have been attracted as extra space became available through rehabilitation projects.

Nelson, B.C., is the one of the three Heritage Canada project community which has been evaluated. The evaluation was undertaken by the Regional District of Central Kootenay and was largely based upon a resident and business survey. The purpose of the evaluation was to assist Heritage Canada in evaluating their own program, which ran from 1981 to 1984, and to provide recommendations for setting up a second phase of the program. The evaluation gauges the program to be a qualified success. The qualification is that of time. The evaluator felt it was still too soon since the completion of the program to judge its long term effects.

Although the efforts of Heritage Canada and the City of Nelson were recognized and applauded by the evaluator, two factors tempered a greater degree of success in the Nelson project. First, the extremely poor and declining economic conditions which hit the Kootenay region at about the same time the program commenced only exacerbated an already bad situation. Second, in spite of the many efforts of the coordinator, the development officer, the City, and the Chamber of Commerce, downtown businessmen themselves remained relatively apathetic.

Nevertheless, the Nelson evaluation clearly indicates that in spite of almost overwhelming odds, the comprehensive approach to downtown revitalization, which includes physical restoration and improvements, combined with promotions, better marketing practice and economic restructuring, does work.

NOTE...

The following excerpt taken from the District of Central Kootenay's report, prepared by Stephen Lauer, Economic Development Officer, best describes his evaluation of the impact on downtown's economic viability of the Nelson revitalization program.

> "In the case of the Nelson Main Street Programme, it is difficult to determine its influence on the economic health of the downtown core. First the programme was initiated at the same time that Nelson was reeling from a number of devastating economic forces. The forest industry, the mainstay of the Nelson economy, was hit very hard during the early eighties with the permanent closure of the plywood plant and with several temporary shutdowns of the sawmill. The transfer of two Provincial Government departments from Nelson and the overall reduction of employee levels, decreased income and employment from this sector by 1983. This situation was compounded with the closure of the university center in May, 1984. Secondly, the full economic impact of the programme truly cannot be assessed at this early stage. The Main Street programme has created and enhanced a product that now needs to be delivered to the market place before accruing significant economic benefits.
>
> However, certain criteria, some quantitative and some subjective, exist that point to some indications. Between the period of 1981 to mid 1983 (the bleakest period of the economic downturn), an estimated twenty-two retail and service stores permanently closed in Nelson. Of the total, 55 per cent were located in the mall, 36 per cent were situated in the downtown core, and 9 per cent were elsewhere in the city. Compared to the mall, businesses in the core seemed to "weather the storm" and a higher proportion remained in business.

By 1984, closures of businesses in the downtown core, practically ceased. Several businesses, both new ventures and expanded existing ones, appeared in the downtown including two restaurants, a gift shop, an expanded art shop, a racquet sports court, a night club in an existing hotel, and two street vendors.

A renewal of confidence in the downtown was acknowledged by those interviewed. It was felt that the programme prevented further economic disintegration and additional business failures. As well, it defined an area of the community that was attractive to business and would have a positive influence on business development decisions. However, it should be noted that the business community has not yet experienced the repercussions of the recent DTUC closure and the reoccurring shut down of the mill.

Second storey businesses seemed to benefit from the programme. Interior renovations occurred in the Burns Block and the Medical Arts building housing several businesses and personal service related firms such as doctors, lawyers, and hair dressers.

Within the 300 to 600 blocks of Baker Street, appraised values jumped from $10.0 million in 1980 to $13 million by the end of 1983. Thus the value of property increased by 28.5 per cent during that period. Although inflation is responsible for part of the increase, improvements to the physical resource also played a significant role."[53]

FOOTNOTES

FOOTNOTES

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